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What's in a Face?

Rethinking the Greek Portrait through Hellenistic Glyptic

By

Laure Marest-Caffey

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History of Art

in the

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Andrew F. Stewart, Chair

Professor Whitney M. Davis

Professor Christopher H. Hallett

Professor Nikolaos Papazarkadas

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## Abstract

### What's in a Face?

#### Rethinking the Greek Portrait through Hellenistic Glyptic

by

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Professor Andrew F. Stewart, Chair

In *Poetics* (1448b), Aristotle describes two kinds of pleasure drawn from contemplating portraits. The viewer can either enjoy the image (the mental representation of something else) or the picture (the object of contemplation in itself). Two millennia later, the dichotomy still resonates in the study of ancient Greek portraiture and its origins. Scholars have often been more interested in the “who” (the image) rather than in the “what is in a face” (the picture). Instead of focusing on the traditional, well-studied corpora of marble and bronze sculpture and coins, the present study uses glyptic (the art of gem carving) to challenge the current understanding of Hellenistic portraiture.

The idiosyncrasies of engraved portraits, particularly their focus on the face and absence of identifying inscriptions, problematize the methods of traditional scholarship. Indeed, the modern obsession with recognizing historical figures, often through empirical—and unsystematic—comparison with identified portraits and biographical readings, risks a potentially anachronistic understanding of Greek portraiture, centered on the mimetic and psychological preoccupations of the genre in Western art. Rather the ancient practice should be understood as a complex cultural phenomenon deeply informed by context. The first step towards a better understanding is to embrace the entirety of the corpus of material evidence with an awareness of historiographical biases that do not mirror ancient thought.

The present study adopts new approaches from a variety of disciplines from cultural anthropology to cognitive neuroscience and proposes a new set of methods to study Hellenistic engraved portraits. First, the thorny question of identification and its methods is tackled with a re-evaluation of the use of coins as comparanda to identify engraved portraits of rulers. Proposed guidelines, tested on a case study, are based on a better understanding of numismatic practices and the concept of typology and its applicability across periods and media.

The subsequent three chapters shift the focus from the image to the picture. The first addresses three formal characteristics of engraved portraiture, ie., its scale, format, and perspective, to shed light on the Greek conception of the face as it relates to the individual. The next chapter opens with a discussion of the emergence of cameo carving as a sign of growing interest in the materiality and visibility of engraved portraits in the Hellenistic period. It illustrates how an embodied approach to miniatures as objects of personal adornment unveils

strategies of identity construction. The final chapter looks at the socio-economic use of seals. The agentive role of engraved portraits is reconstructed through a study and network analysis of sealings discovered in Egypt and Iraq.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

The editorial guidelines of the *American Journal of Archaeology* provided abbreviations for ancient authors/texts, standard reference works, and journals. Papyrological references follow the bibliographical guide of Papyri.info.

*SC* Houghton, A., C. Lorber, and O. Hoover, eds. 2002–2008. *Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue*. 4 vols. New York: American Numismatic Society.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### Portraits through the Magnifying Glass

This is why people enjoy looking at portraits (*eikones*), because through contemplating them it comes about that they understand and infer what each element means, for instance that “this person is so-and-so.” And if one happens not to have seen the subject before, the image will not give pleasure *qua* mimesis but because of its execution or color, or for some other such reason.

Aristotle, *Poetica* 1448b15–19.

For it is obvious that one must consider the affection which is produced by sensation in the soul, and in that part of the body which contains the soul—the affection, the lasting state of which we call memory—as a kind of picture (*zōgraphēma*); for the stimulus produced impresses a sort of likeness of the percept, just as when men seal with signet rings. . . . Just as what is painted on panels is at once a picture (*zōon*) and an image (*eikōn*), though it is both and yet the essence of the two is not the same, and it is possible to think of it both as a picture and as an image, so in the same way we must regard the mental picture within us both as an object of contemplation in itself and as the mental picture of something else.

Aristotle, *De memoria* 450a29–b1, 21–26.

If visitors step into the classical gallery of a museum today, they are bound to be greeted by rows of white marble portraits of men and women from the past. They are struck by the feeling of immediacy that seems to bridge the temporal chasm of the encounter. They are seized by a powerful urge, a need to *be introduced* to the cold, staring eyes, an itch to *know* the identity of the sitter, and maybe the elation of *recognizing* the face. The effect is mediated by a sustained tradition of portraiture in Western art since antiquity and the gradual canonization of the mimetic and psychological characteristics of the genre since the late medieval period. Cognates of the genre, from political caricatures to selfies, have pervaded modern life to such an extent that ancient portraiture seems accessible, although contemporary viewers might be more comfortable with two-dimensional formats such as mummy and panel portraits. For instance, a painted roundel depicting the Roman emperor Septimus Severus, his wife Julia Domna, and their two sons Geta and Caracalla recalls the familiar visual vocabulary of modern family portraits, including those of political figures (pl. 1).

The ancients experienced the same, universal impulse that incites a viewer to identify a likeness's referent through either intimate knowledge or educated inference, as stated in the passage of Aristotle's *Poetica* quoted above. Although criticized for its oversimplification and cognitivist undertone, Aristotle's point is better understood in the context of the author's broader

argument that mimesis and recognition are correlates of a human need to make sense of the surrounding world.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the philosopher acknowledges an equal pleasure in appreciating a portrait for its aesthetic qualities. Indeed, Aristotle was keenly aware of the dual nature of a portrait both as a picture (the object of contemplation in itself) and an image (the mental representation of something else), as he clearly demonstrates in the *De memoria* excerpt quoted above.<sup>2</sup> Yet the former aspect, the pictoriality of ancient portraits, has largely been sidelined in modern scholarship in favor of identification. Greek and Roman portraiture was, for a long time, caught in a mimetic tangle: the genre was said to have emerged in classical antiquity *because of* the particular interest of the ancients in mimesis; therefore, mimesis was the key to understanding the genre.<sup>3</sup> Fortunately our understanding of Greek portraits (especially Hellenistic ones inasmuch as they were thought to display particular “resemblance”) has evolved much over the past decades.

Ancient Greek portraiture—the source of an entire genre of the Western artistic tradition—has been the focus of much scholarly interest for over a century.<sup>4</sup> While all agree that the late Classical and early Hellenistic periods saw the emergence of a new kind of representation, there has been much debate concerning its significance, and ideological and phenomenological genesis. The development has traditionally been correlated with a rising interest in physiognomic likeness and individuality.<sup>5</sup> However, recent scholars have proposed a “soft” structuralist reading.<sup>6</sup> In this interpretation, ancient portraits are constructed from a visual vocabulary specific to particular socio-cultural groups evidenced in certain body formats, gestures, and so on. Finally, a series of studies published in the last decade have tackled the problematic anonymity of many ancient portraits, thus forcing the field to “see beyond” identification.<sup>7</sup> They introduce a more nuanced understanding of the language of ancient portraiture.<sup>8</sup>

Yet all the aforementioned studies focus on the same media, i.e., marble and bronze sculpture with some coins, mostly as comparanda. Instead of concentrating on these traditional and well-studied corpora, the present study uses engraved gems as prisms through which to re-

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<sup>1</sup> Halliwell 2002, 151–76.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Brilliant (1991, 7) calls the phenomenon “the oscillation between art object and human subject.” For a discussion of the difference between pictures and images, see Davis 2011, 202–4.

<sup>3</sup> The phenomenon is not exclusive to the study of ancient portraits. See for instance, Pointon 1993, 8–9.

<sup>4</sup> The study by J.J. Bernoulli (1901) is considered the first systematic treatment of the subject in modern scholarship.

<sup>5</sup> Richter 1965a, 1. “One can see here, for the first time in history, the gradual evolution from a generalized to an individualized likeness.”

<sup>6</sup> Pollitt 1986, 59–62; Smith 1988, 46–53; 1993; Zanker 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Piekarski 2004, 2–4; Dillon 2006, 8–9; Jaeggi 2008. Some have wondered whether “anonymous” portraits should be studied as a group (Daehner 2007, 171).

<sup>8</sup> The authors used different reading grids from gender- and age-specific “body formats” (Dillon 2006, 77) to “aesthetic categories” (Jaeggi 2008, 66). For an anthropological reading based on “social ages,” see Hölscher 2009.



examine Hellenistic portraits.<sup>9</sup> Although glyptic (the art of gem carving) is often neglected today and labeled “minor art,” it was put on par with sculpture and painting in antiquity and has survived better than sculpture. Moreover, the idiosyncrasies of engraved portraits, particularly their focus on the face and absence of identifying inscriptions, problematize the methods of traditional scholarship and prompt us to adopt new approaches. I contend that the obsession with recognizing historical figures, often through empirical—and unsystematic—comparison with identified portraits and biographical readings, risks a potentially anachronistic understanding of Greek portraiture, influenced by the mimetic and psychological preoccupations of the genre in Western art. Rather, the ancient practice should be understood as a complex cultural phenomenon.<sup>10</sup> This study offers new interpretive possibilities inspired from a variety of disciplines from cultural anthropology to cognitive neuroscience and advocates a more *context-specific reading* of portraits. The goal is to provide methodological guidelines with regard to the contentious topic of identification and bring into focus three aspects of engraved portraits that have not received proper attention, namely their pictoriality, physicality, and sociality.

## Sources

A brief examination of current scholarship suggests that engraved gems are *at best* peripheral to the subject of Hellenistic portraiture. Intaglio (engraved into the stone), and more rarely cameo (carved in relief), portraits crop up here and there in pages of text but they mainly appear as comparanda on plates. They are often seen as suspect and disruptive. Indeed, documented provenience (their findspot) is the exception rather than the rule. Furthermore, engraved likenesses are perceived to deviate from identified sculptural and numismatic portrait types.<sup>11</sup> I will address scholars’ reluctance about gems below. But, first, it is necessary to present the nature and scope of the sources presented in this study. Indeed, from the lack of academic interest we could deduce that the evidence concerning glyptic portraiture is scant. Yet nothing could be further from the truth.

Thousands of glyptic portraits (engraved on gems) and sigillographic ones (impressed on sealings) dating from the Hellenistic period survive today. These range from skilled depictions rising from the superimposed layers of banded stones (pl. 2.1) to simple designs mass-produced by pressing glass onto molds (pl. 2.2). The bulk of the glyptic corpus is composed of profile heads and busts engraved into small, oval gems (usually made from semi-precious stones such as

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<sup>9</sup> The only substantive treatment of the material is found in Plantzos 1999, 42–65.

<sup>10</sup> The best-known illustration of the fascination with identification is Richter’s choice to organize her seminal study “according to the centuries in which the people portrayed lived” despite the fact that many portraits are posthumous (Richter 1965a, ix). The abridged 1984 edition, revised by R.R.R. Smith, is organized alphabetically. Not coincidentally, Smith (1988, 1–5) was one of the first scholars to question the preeminence of identification. The contemporary “passion for identifying” is not unique to the field of antiquity. In an article on Renaissance portraiture, Georges Didi-Huberman (1998, 165–6) bemoans the common confusion between *particular* and *individual* likenesses.

<sup>11</sup> Smith 1988, 12.

chalcedonies and quartzes) originally fitted into rings. A large portion of gems are now kept in European museums that have inherited royal collections, such as the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris and the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, and other public collections around the world that were acquired from Grand Tourists and nineteenth-century connoisseurs, such as that of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.<sup>12</sup> Other specimens are scattered in private collections and sometimes appear at auctions in the art market. Unfortunately public collections are unevenly published. Some, especially those in German museums, are well documented, while others are only partially published or not at all. As for private collections, they are typically inaccessible and the archaeological equivalents of “fruits of the poisonous tree.” Thus, navigating the records requires particular training and stamina.

Extant gems only represent a fraction of the original production, which was extremely prolific in antiquity. It suffices to consider the hoards containing tens of thousands of sealings (lumps of malleable, quick-setting material impressed with a seal) discovered around the Mediterranean to grasp the prevalence of the medium.<sup>13</sup> Among the seal impressions, hundreds feature portraits (pl. 2.3). They constitute an essential supplement to the corpus since the majority of extant gems have no secure provenience.<sup>14</sup> Although few are fully published, sealing archives present the distinct advantage of having been excavated in securely dated, and often closed, contexts. Among the most important archives containing portraits are those from Delos excavated by the French School in 1974, 1975, and 1987 (pl. 3); those possibly from Edfu, Egypt, now split between the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, and the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam; those from Paphos, discovered in the 1960s and 1970s; those from Kedesh, Israel, discovered in 1999–2000 by an American team; and those from Seleukeia on the Tigris, Iraq, excavated between 1967 and 1972 by an Italian mission. Unfortunately only the last group is published in its entirety.

Ancient literary sources offer invaluable insights on gems from naturalist, philosophical, socio-cultural, and aesthetic points of view. Theophrastos' gemological treatise *De lapidibus*, the oldest of such texts, fortuitously dates from the early Hellenistic period. The author is mainly concerned with the natural properties of various minerals and hardstones. His systematic work represents an important source of information concerning the ancient understanding of mineralogy (much influenced by Platonic and Aristotelian theories), location of mines, origins of stones, system of value, and techniques of gem enhancement. Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturalis*, written in the late first century A.D., extensively quotes Theophrastos' treatise as well as other sources and supplements them with a variety of factual information, historical

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<sup>12</sup> For a history of the Cabinet's collections, see Sarmant 1994; for the collections of Catherine the Great and subsequent Russian rulers transferred to the Hermitage, see Neverov and Piotrovsky 1997, 13, 75–7; for the E.P. Warren collection, which was donated to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, see Beazley and Boardman 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Concerning sealing archives and related bibliographic references, see Appendix A.

<sup>14</sup> Most gems have long been in collections and some may never have been deposited in archaeological contexts in the first place. It should be noted that a recorded findspot does not always provide answers to our questions, particularly regarding chronology, since gems were regularly kept in use long after they were made.

anecdotes, and popular beliefs concerning gems' magical and medicinal properties. Recently rediscovered epigrams by the third-century B.C. poet Poseidippos of Pella constitute our best source concerning the cultural value of and aesthetic appreciation for engraved gems in the Hellenistic period.<sup>15</sup> Preserved on a papyrus that had been recycled for the pectoral of an Egyptian mummy, the collection features, among others, twenty ekphrastic epigrams on minerals and engraved gems, known as the *Lithika*.<sup>16</sup> Finally, a handful of epigrams found in the *Anthologia Graeca* can be added to the list.<sup>17</sup>

### **In defense of gems**

The overview of available sources begs the question of why engraved gems are virtually absent from the canonical collection of artworks found in standard references on ancient Greek portraiture. The discrepancy between the present study's focus and the inattention usually given to the medium needs to be addressed lest the premise of the project be undermined. Three distinct reasons for the current situation can be identified: first, a historiographical bias in the Western art historical tradition; second, methodological difficulties related to identification; and third, a general atmosphere of suspicion polluting the field of glyptic since the early nineteenth century.

Engraved gems are neglected today—not only with regard to portraiture—because they are often relegated to the rank of *Kleinkunst* or more pejoratively labeled “minor art.” However, this classification corresponds more closely to a modern historiographical sensibility than an ancient appraisal. That is not to say that the ancients themselves did not ascribe some hierarchy to different media. Yet the category of “minor arts,” lumping together objects as different as furniture, jewelry, ceramics, and other “decorative arts,” is entirely unsatisfactory when discussing the material production of pre-Renaissance and non-Western cultures. Indeed, the canonization of “major arts” or “fine arts” as painting, sculpture, and architecture, theorized in the writings of Renaissance thinkers and most particularly those of Giorgio Vasari, postdates classical antiquity by well over a millennium.<sup>18</sup>

Transposing our post-Renaissance understanding of artists and their art to ancient practice is extremely misleading. For instance, ancient craftsmen did not enjoy the status of “artists” as we understand it today. Aristotle, among other ancient authors, clearly condemns any form of manual labor for the ideal citizen. He even compares the artistic trade to a form of slavery.<sup>19</sup> Of course, in reality, skilled artisans enjoyed fame and secured through their craft the financial means to improve their social status by acquiring lands and performing liturgies and

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<sup>15</sup> Bastianini et al. 2001; Austin and Bastianini 2002.

<sup>16</sup> For discussions of the *Lithika*, see Hunter 2004; Schur 2004; Smith 2004; Kuttner 2005; Fuqua 2007.

<sup>17</sup> *Anthologia Graeca* 9.746–8, 750–2, 776. Concerning ekphrastic epigrams, see Gutzwiller 1995; Prioux 2007; 2008; Rush 2012.

<sup>18</sup> For an excellent treatment of the modern bias against luxury art in general, see Lapatin 2015, 1–16.

<sup>19</sup> Arist. *Pol.* 1277a33–b8; Lucian *Somn.* 7–9.

other acts of benefaction for their city. In fact, the perfection of a particular skill proportionally ensured one's livelihood. As for the ranking among media, it depended on a variety of factors including, among others, the degree of removal from menial labor, mimetic potentiality, genre, and value of the raw material.<sup>20</sup>

What was the status of glyptic in antiquity? Although there is no ancient equivalent of Vasari's pantheon, literary evidence shows that the medium enjoyed a certain form of prestige. In the last section of his *Historia Naturalis* (books 33–37), Pliny the Elder discusses metals and minerals, and by extension related arts such as toreutics, sculpture, and painting. The author reserves the place of honor for gemstones by dedicating his final book to the topic and writes, “for most a single gem is enough to behold the supreme and absolute perfection of Nature's work.”<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Poseidippos describes engraved gems as “wonders” (*thaumata*) twice in his *Lithika*.<sup>22</sup> Although much more scientific than historiographical, Theophrastos' treatise provides further testimony to the appreciation of and interest in gems in early Hellenistic society.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, gemstones in their raw form were highly valued for their optical properties, mainly their ability to reflect or diffract light but also for their bright and nuanced palettes. Merchants traveled east as far as India (then the limit of the known world) to procure rare stones of the finest quality. The demand was so extensive that Pliny claims that there was nothing so lucrative as forging gemstones.<sup>24</sup> Numerous anecdotes illustrate the antics, both in term of price and effort, that some collectors were willing to perform in order to acquire the object of their desire.<sup>25</sup>

Gem carvers themselves were often granted special consideration. Pliny relates the tradition that only the painter Apelles, the gem carver Pyrgoteles, and the sculptor Lysippos, *in that order*, could fashion Alexander the Great's portraits.<sup>26</sup> Regardless of the veracity of the story, its iteration by the Roman author indicates a continued credence in ancient times.<sup>27</sup> Not only is Pyrgoteles named in prestigious company, but his technique is also deemed equal to painting and sculpture, and worthy of a royal edict. Furthermore, Poseidippos dedicates sixteen epigrams to gem engravers and their works as opposed to nine poems concerning sculptors.<sup>28</sup> Interestingly the creator of the collection also gave glyptic pride of place since the *Lithika* opens the compendium, which contains verses about topics as diverse as tombs, shipwrecks, and divination. And the poet Phoinix of Kolophon even lampooned Poseidippos and contemporaries for granting too much value to the craft.<sup>29</sup> Clearly, the modern dismissal of glyptic does not reflect the ancient interest in the medium.

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<sup>20</sup> Stewart 1990, 65–72.

<sup>21</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.1. Author's translation.

<sup>22</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 13, line 2; 15, line 7. The concept of “wonder” is further discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>23</sup> Theophr. *De lapidibus* 23.33–35.

<sup>24</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.198.

<sup>25</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.18–20.

<sup>26</sup> Plin. *HN* 7.125; 37.8.

<sup>27</sup> Stewart 1993, 29–30.

<sup>28</sup> For more about the epigrams on statues, the *Andriantopoiika*, see Stewart 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Powell 1925, no. 6.

The second reason for the exclusion of engraved gems from most studies of Hellenistic portraiture relates to the dominant methodological premise of twentieth-century scholarship that identification—or at least its possibility—is a necessary condition for the study of a portrait. The origin of such an assumption should probably be traced back to the visual and literary traditions of *imitatio* and exemplarity of illustrious men in medieval, Renaissance, and early modern Europe, and to the Western hermeneutic need to uncover the psychology and personality of a sitter in a representation.<sup>30</sup> The preference for identifiable portraits was detrimental to the study of engraved gems, which never bear an identifying inscription. But it also had a negative impact on the study of ancient portraits in general. While there may be a certain uneasiness in confronting anonymity, the entirety of the corpus should be addressed for the sake of methodological integrity.<sup>31</sup> In the section “Facing up Anonymity” of her book on Greek portraits, Sheila Dillon writes:

Until now the history of Greek portraiture has primarily been written on the basis of the portraits of only about twenty individuals. . . . This extremely narrow focus on a small handful of named portraits has, I maintain, produced a history that is too neat and tidy—even deceptively simple—particularly in some of its basic premises concerning stylistic development and subject identification. This narrow focus has greatly limited the kinds of questions we have asked about Greek portraits, as the interest in and aim to identify and date portraits have tended to foreclose sustained critical analysis of these images as representation.<sup>32</sup>

The same could be said of the scholarly focus on marble and bronze portraits to the detriment of other media.

Finally, the recent art historical trend has not been kind to the field of glyptic in general. Early modern antiquarians, and even the “Father of Art History,” J.J. Winckelmann, were very much interested in ancient gems. When copying was deemed an educative and perfecting tool in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the study and (re)production of glyptic works was highly encouraged. However, scholarly interest has slowly waned since the nineteenth century despite some punctual—but often magisterial—studies by renowned classicists.

The study of gems has suffered from a general lack of interest in the scholarly community because it was considered the privileged domain of collectors and artists. Unlike ancient sculptures and paintings, gems were continuously collected since antiquity. Many glyptic works were never “lost”—although the archival trail may be—and have been passed on from one collection to the next ever since. The most striking example probably is that of a large sardonyx phiale (libation bowl) usually known as the Tazza Farnese whose provenance can be traced on and off from Ptolemaic Egypt to the court of the Turko-Mongol ruler Timur at Samarkand before

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<sup>30</sup> Richter 1965a, 1. “And we shall see that throughout this long period the Greek artist, even in his most realistic achievements, always kept in mind the essential requisite of an artistic portrait—that it must penetrate into the psychology of the model and sum up his personality.” About exemplarity, see Lyons 1989; Hampton 1990; Scanlon 1994; Gaylard 2009; 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Smith 1984, 7. “It is hard to interpret a portrait without knowing who is represented or at least to what category of person he or she belongs.” See also Smith 1988, 1–5.

<sup>32</sup> Dillon 2006, 2.

reappearing as the prized possession of Renaissance and early modern popes and princes, and a source of inspiration for several illustrious artists of the same periods (pls. 4, 5.1).<sup>33</sup> Indeed, ancient gems have served as fruitful sources of inspiration for artists since the Renaissance. The sixteenth-century goldsmith and sculptor Benvenuto Cellini reports that Michelangelo used to buy large numbers of gems from peasants who were unearthing them from their fields and that upon seeing an ancient miniature representing Hercules subduing the Nemean Lion commented that he had never seen a more wonderful work.<sup>34</sup> Peter Paul Rubens, who possessed an extensive collection of ancient gems including several portraits, even wrote to the French humanist Claude Peiresc, “nothing has ever delighted me more than gems.”<sup>35</sup> But engraved gems seemed too “precious” to be taken seriously by scholars. These exquisite miniatures smacked of a kind of self-indulgent luxury that came to clash with the noble, quiet, and rational conception of antique taste.<sup>36</sup>

Even worse, a general climate of suspicion has plagued the field. The rise of reproductions and forgeries in the late eighteenth century and particularly the nineteenth century to answer the ever-growing demand for Grand Tour souvenirs created a confusing situation. Misunderstanding, misrepresentation, loss of records, or intentional deception resulted in the erroneous inclusion of copies and works *à l’antique* into the sanctioned corpus of ancient gems—the most (in)famous case being that of the collection of Prince Poniatowski.<sup>37</sup> The small scale of gems has made them preferred targets of forgers with an eye for easy profits, especially since the impressions and casts found in dactyliothecae (cabinets filled with plaster or glass reproductions) became convenient resources. A stigma still clings to the study of gems because of the lingering uncertainty surrounding the integrity of the corpus. While it is an understandable

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<sup>33</sup> Belozerskaya 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Cellini 1888, vol. 1, 63–4; Middleton 1891, 96.

<sup>35</sup> Rubens 1887, 215; Neverov 1979.

<sup>36</sup> Lapatin 2015, 11.

<sup>37</sup> For an overview of eighteenth century glyptic fakes, see Rudoe 1992. On the Poniatowski affair, see Wagner 2008; 2013; Rambach 2014. On the involvement of the Italian engraver Giovanni Calandrelli, see Platz-Horster 2005, 13–7. Prince Stanislas Poniatowski (1754-1833), who settled in Rome in 1795 after fleeing his native Poland, commissioned in the winter 1815-1816 about 2,500 gems with mythological themes to supplement his ancient collection. The greatest Italian engravers of the time such as Luigi Pichler, Tommaso Cades, Giuseppe Girometti, Nicola Cerbara, “Ginganelli,” Giovanni Dies, Antonio Odelli, and Giovanni Calandrelli worked on the order, which must have been completed by 1828-1829 when Poniatowski (1832) was preparing the publication of his collection. A scandal arose after the death of the Prince when the gems were being sold at auction in 1839 as genuine ancient works. They are today dispersed throughout the world. It is unclear whether Poniatowski himself ever had a nefarious intent, although the addition of signatures from known ancient carvers on his commissioned gems might suggest so. While these works are often shunned today and hidden in storerooms, they are remarkable works of the neoclassical tradition and deserve a place in museums as such.

fear, the pervasiveness of forgeries has greatly been overstated.<sup>38</sup> Casts are readily identifiable because of their physical characteristics, and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century creations often betray a neoclassical flavor (pl. 5.2).<sup>39</sup> As for more recent forgeries, provenance research often identifies them since engraved gems have been inventoried, recorded, and cast as early as the Renaissance and sometimes earlier. Furthermore, the small sample of gems and large number of sealings excavated in archaeological contexts provide excellent touchstones.

### **Discourse on gems and portraits**

The discourse on ancient gems has a long and checkered history.<sup>40</sup> We have seen that the medium was prized in antiquity and much discussed by ancient authors. The interest in glyptic did not fade after the Late Antique period, although it seems to have been curtailed to collecting and inclusion in religious artifacts such as reliquaries and covers of codices. With the Renaissance reemerged scholarly writings on the medium, first with Fulvio Orsini who illustrated several ancient gems, including several portraits, in his 1570 *Imagines et elogia*.<sup>41</sup> However, the most significant impetus came from humanist collectors, like Abraham von Goorle, who wished to share their enthusiasm for the miniatures in their cabinets of curiosities (pl. 6).<sup>42</sup> Their works were richly (and expensively) illustrated with copperplate engravings. Influenced by the cultural and artistic milieu of the time, topics of particular interest included portraits and signatures of master carvers. Compendia drawing from different collections around a specific theme appeared in parallel during the seventeenth century.<sup>43</sup>

The study of ancient glyptic took a more analytical turn in the middle of the eighteenth century with the publication of more specialized essays. The collector and dealer Pierre-Jean Mariette published in 1750 a treatise drawing from the French royal collections in which he presents a history of the collection and a study of ancient techniques and mineralogy, along with a *catalogue raisonné*.<sup>44</sup> Four years later, the gem carver Lorenz Natter responded to Mariette's accusations of forgery (probably for his works *à l'antique*) with his own technical treatise in which he dispenses practical advice and encourages students to copy the ancient masters.<sup>45</sup> Around the same time, both Winckelmann and the Comte de Caylus showed considerable

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<sup>38</sup> Boardman 1970, 17.

<sup>39</sup> To the trained eye, there could be no doubt as to their origin. I recognized two Poniatowski gems the moment I laid eyes on them in the vault of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (pl. 5.2). They are often inspired by literary sources rather than ancient artworks, and signed with the names of famous Greek engravers.

<sup>40</sup> For an overview of publications since the Renaissance, see Zazoff 1983, 1–23.

<sup>41</sup> Orsini 1570.

<sup>42</sup> Goorle 1601.

<sup>43</sup> Of particular interest for the beauty of its illustrations and focus on signed works is Stosch and Picart 1724.

<sup>44</sup> Mariette 1750.

<sup>45</sup> Natter 1754.

interest in the medium in their foundational works.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, Winckelmann published in 1760 the entire collection of Baron von Stosch, following a thematic organization.<sup>47</sup> The other major innovation of these years was technical. Heretofore gems had been illustrated through the expensive and time-consuming process of copperplate engraving. But in 1755 Philipp Daniel Lippert introduced dactyliothecae, large book-like cabinets containing drawers filled with plaster casts of gems from prominent European collections (pl. 7).<sup>48</sup> The new format knew an immediate success since about 1,000 gems could be published in a single volume!<sup>49</sup>

In the late eighteenth century and nineteenth century, some antiquarians started expressing doubts as to the authenticity of some of the gems previously published. G.E. Lessing led the controversy with a pointed critique of Winckelmann, who, he alleged, published several fakes in his catalogue of the Stosch collection.<sup>50</sup> A certain suspicion permeated the discourse of the early nineteenth century and the situation was aggravated by some scandals such as the sale of the Poniatowski collection as ancient, often signed, works instead of neoclassical creations by the best carvers of the time.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, in the late nineteenth century, photography revolutionized the publication of large catalogs. The German art historian Adolf Furtwängler published such a comprehensive work on the Berlin collection, illustrated with seventy plates (mostly of plaster impressions which are much easier to photograph in bulk than actual gems).<sup>52</sup> But his *magnum opus* appeared at the turn of the century under the title *Die antiken Gemmen: Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst im klassischen Altertum*, which offered a magisterial history of the ancient art.<sup>53</sup> In the three volumes, Furtwängler organized by periods the enormous and unruly corpus drawing from world collections. In the following decades, the study of ancient glyptic took a more stylistic bend, particularly with the work of John Beazley on the collection of the American collector E.P. Warren.<sup>54</sup>

Glyptic scholarship of the twentieth century can be divided into three categories inherited from the history of the discipline. First, we have catalogs of museum collections with their traditional stylistico-periodic organization (and sometimes attempts at very narrow stylistic dating). The category encompasses the largest portion of twentieth-century publications. Second, there are a handful of ambitious, often generously illustrated, treatises discussing the history and development of the ancient medium.<sup>55</sup> Last, a small number of focused studies approach a

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<sup>46</sup> Caylus 1752; Winckelmann 1764.

<sup>47</sup> Winckelmann 1760.

<sup>48</sup> Lippert 1755.

<sup>49</sup> Many enterprising cast-makers followed suit with smaller formats organized thematically and destined to a wider audience. For the example of the Paoletti brothers, see Bernardini et al. 1998; Pirzio Biroli Stefanelli 2007.

<sup>50</sup> Zazoff 1983, 17 n. 48.

<sup>51</sup> Supra n. 37.

<sup>52</sup> Furtwängler 1896.

<sup>53</sup> Furtwängler 1900.

<sup>54</sup> Beazley 1920.

<sup>55</sup> Richter 1968; Boardman 1970 (a revised 2001 edition is also available); Zazoff 1983; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007.



specific period or homogenous body of material from a typological, stylistic, or thematic point of view.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, improvements in macro photography have allowed images of the gems themselves to complement those of plaster casts and other impressions in the plates.

Unfortunately very few scholarly works treat the topic of engraved portraiture. And when they do, the main concern is identification and stylistic dating.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the arguments tend to be circular. A profile is recognized as a specific historical figure, which leads to the dating of the gem during the lifetime of the individual. In turn, the stylistic dating of the piece supports the identification. Only very recently have scholars started to move away from this method and its pitfalls. For instance, Dimitris Plantzos dedicated a chapter of his book on Hellenistic gems to portraits of rulers.<sup>58</sup> More recently, a study by Jörn Lang has proposed a cultural reading of the use of philosopher and poet portraits engraved on ringstones in the Roman period.<sup>59</sup> He argues that these portraits should be considered in the context of the late Republican and early Imperial discourse on education. Unfortunately non-royal portraits have garnered little interest. Finally, the recent publication of sealing archives, including the portraits from Seleukeia on the Tigris and Paphos, will hopefully entice scholars to take a new look at the material.<sup>60</sup>

The methodological shift in the study of Greek portraits over the past forty years provides the perfect environment for a new appraisal of engraved portraiture. Like in the case of glyptic, the concern for identification long dominated the field of portrait statuary. In her seminal three volumes on Greek portraits, Gisela Richter masterfully amassed and organized a wealth of evidence from a variety of literary, visual, and archaeological sources, thus laying the foundation for subsequent works.<sup>61</sup> She even attempted in the last volume to put some order in the scholarship concerning Hellenistic ruler portraits, a field much complicated by the paucity and nature (mostly numismatic) of the evidence. Since the 1970s, several archaeologists and art historians have approached the subject of ruler portraiture from a dynastic perspective. Helmut Kyrieleis introduced a great deal of new evidence with his study of Ptolemaic portraits.<sup>62</sup> In the same tradition, several German and French scholars followed suit with other dynasties.<sup>63</sup> Although these authors were often mainly concerned with identification, their work greatly facilitated any subsequent research. Without their contributions to the field, none of the most recent developments would have been possible.

The 1980s and 1990s introduced a new understanding of Greek portraits as social constructs. J.J. Pollitt wrote of “role portraits,” while Paul Zanker preferred “body types.”<sup>64</sup> R.R.R. Smith interpreted ruler portraits as original responses to old formats in the new context of

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<sup>56</sup> Among the better-known examples are Boardman 1963; 1968; Zazoff 1968; Platz-Horster 1970.

<sup>57</sup> Vollenweider 1972; 1974; 1995.

<sup>58</sup> Plantzos 1999, 42–65.

<sup>59</sup> Lang 2012.

<sup>60</sup> Messina and Mollo 2004; Kyrieleis 2015.

<sup>61</sup> Richter 1965a.

<sup>62</sup> Kyrieleis 1975.

<sup>63</sup> Fleischer 1991; Queyrel 2003; Gans 2006.

<sup>64</sup> Pollitt 1986, 59; Zanker 1995, 54.

Hellenistic monarchy, and Andrew Stewart understood them as a “technology of power.”<sup>65</sup> In the 2000s, several studies “rescued” anonymous portraits from the dark storerooms to which they had been relegated because of their loss of identity.<sup>66</sup> In stepping outside the comfort zone of named representations, scholars such as Sheila Dillon painted a more complex picture of Greek portraiture by introducing more flexibility into the system of “body types” (or “body formats” to avoid confusion with “types” as understood in canonical “portrait types”).

### *Defining the Greek portrait*

What is a Greek portrait? For as long as the concern with identification dominated the field of study, this question was mainly addressed on a case-by-case basis. The resulting, and often implicit, definition depended largely on the method of identification that was used and on the conceptual triad defining the referentiality of a portrait in modern thought. A portrait could “re-present”—quite literally “make present”—any and all of the following characteristic of an absent individual: their physiognomy, personality, and social status. Corporeal appearance, particularly facial traits, represented a particular locus of scholarly interest either to exemplify the observed rise of a heightened particularism in the Hellenistic period and discuss its relationship with mimesis, or in older—now disavowed—scholarship to serve as a springboard for character studies justified by a concurrent rise of physiognomy as a “science” in the late Classical and early Hellenistic periods.<sup>67</sup> In the later “soft” structuralist reading, Greek portraits rather appear to be constructed according to shared (as opposed to individual) iconographical categories as socio-cultural studies. Recently, Othmar Jaeggi proposed the following definition, “A Greek portrait is a representation of the human figure, which mainly conveys a statement regarding the person or a political message and is characterized by its accuracy and differentiation.”<sup>68</sup> For all its merit, this definition sidesteps key issues. What is the role of context? Are portraits passive projections or mediators? These are questions we will return to at the end of this study.

But what was a portrait for the Greeks? No ancient author offers a handy definition, but some literary sources provide hints. First, the Greek word used for portrait, *eikōn*, relates to the verb *eikō*, meaning “to be like” and “to seem.” It is a versatile word used rather for the concept of “representation” in general than for a specific format or genre, for which the Greeks had specific words such as *andrias* for a statue representing a man. The etymology of *eikōn* could connote the mimetic quality of such representations, thus privileging the idea of “likeness.” Nevertheless, the perfect form of the verb can also mean “to befit,” suggesting a more complex understanding of the concept. The portrait would not be a simple reproduction but rather a construction corresponding to socio-cultural expectations. Were portraits made from life? For

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<sup>65</sup> Smith 1988, 46; Stewart 1993, 60.

<sup>66</sup> Piekarski 2004; Dillon 2006; Jaeggi 2008.

<sup>67</sup> Buschor 1960.

<sup>68</sup> Jaeggi 2008, 62. Author’s translation. “Ein griechisches Porträt ist eine Darstellung der menschlichen Gestalt, die meist eine representative oder politische Aussage zum Ausdruck bringt und durch deren Präzision und Differenzierung gekennzeichnet ist.”

example, according to Xenophon, Socrates once visited the hetaira Theodote while she was sitting for her painted portrait.<sup>69</sup> Yet Theophrastos quips that a flatterer says that one looks just like one's portrait.<sup>70</sup> As for conveying personality, Plutarch states that only the sculptor, and official portraitist of Alexander the Great, Lysippos could "preserve the virile and leonine deameanor" of the Macedonian king.<sup>71</sup> Clearly, the Greek conception of portraiture was complex and multifaceted.

## Chapter outline

This study approaches the question of Hellenistic portraiture from a different angle than previous works. It focuses on a body of material that has not only been overlooked but also often disparaged. The goal is not to rehabilitate the medium for its own sake, although I hope to have shown that the modern bias against engraved gems does not reflect ancient views. Rather, the aim is to embrace the singularity of glyptic portraits as a valuable opportunity to question our current understanding of Greek portraiture.

Chapter 2 tackles the thorny question of identification and its methods. It evaluates the use of coins as comparanda to identify glyptic royal portraits and present guidelines based on a better understanding of numismatic practices. It also discusses the concept of typology and its applicability across periods and media. Indeed, the absence of a rigid system of official portrait types in the Hellenistic period seems indicative of a flexible notion of what constitutes an appropriate portrait depending on contexts, even within a single medium such as glyptic.

Chapter 3 focuses on pictorial characteristics of engraved portraits, particularly the profile view and abbreviated format, and their impact on our understanding of Hellenistic portraiture. Gems, like coins, focus the idea of portrait on the face alone, long before what is traditionally thought to be the impetus for this concentration in the Roman period. I argue that the interest of Greek sculpture in the body as a whole does not amount to a lack of interest in or indifference to the face. In fact, the pictorial choices manifested in glyptic portraits appear as solutions to the problems engendered by a particular conception of the face in Greek thought.

Chapter 4 addresses issues of physicality, understood both as the materiality of engraved portraits and their embodied use. It begins with a discussion of a technical innovation, cameo carving, to show a growing interest in the display of glyptic portraits in the Hellenistic period. I argue that this was no mere technical development but rather that it consecrated a dissociation from the traditional function of engraved gems as seals. The second part illustrates how an embodied approach to engraved portraits, particularly through adornment theory, sheds light on issues of identity construction.

Finally, Chapter 5 looks at engraved portraits through the lens of their socio-economic use as seals. Ancient identity construction through the use of individual representation, both of oneself and of others, is seldom deployed as intricately as on seals as representatives of their

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<sup>69</sup> Xen. *Mem.* 3.11.1–2.

<sup>70</sup> Theophr. *Char.* 2.12.

<sup>71</sup> Plut. *De Alex. fort.* 2.2 (*Mor.* 335b).

owners' agency and warrants of their authority through the process of sealing.<sup>72</sup> Reconstructing patterns of distribution through a network analysis of the sealings discovered in the archive of Seleukeia on the Tigris, I argue that observed differences in the deployment of royal and non-royal portraits stem from the distinctive types of agency at play.

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<sup>72</sup> Much inspiring work has been done with seals from the ancient Near East. See, e.g., Gibson and Biggs 1977; Zettler 1987.

## CHAPTER 2

### Methodology

#### Of Dies and Types

In the introduction of his seminal study, Dimitris Plantzos lists a series of four “working principles” designed to correct the methodological errors of the past in the study of Hellenistic glyptic:

- (1) Stylistic and iconographical analyses are of great significance for a viable classification of the material, but they have to be carried out in the light of the eclectic character of most Hellenistic art, thus limiting the consequence of noted affinities;
- (2) previous views ought to be tested against the background in which they were formulated;
- (3) *comparative material has to be understood on its own merit* [sic; added emphasis] before being used to solve problems posed by the study at hand;
- and (4) solutions to those problems have to be tested against the historical and social parameters current in the Hellenistic period.<sup>73</sup>

Such clarification is indeed necessary in a field that has known a variety of epistemological approaches—“stylistic analysis, identification of persons or situations depicted, the study of signatures and the identification of hands, analysis of technical details, comparison to coinage and sculpture”—but little methodological introspection over the last century. Within the list of previous practices given by Plantzos, two have found particular favor among scholars interested in portraits engraved on gems: identification and comparison to coinage. They are often used in tandem in an asymmetrical relationship in which the latter is a means and the former the end.

Numismatic portraits, ascribed to a specific ruler through legends reading “of king ...” and/or positioned in a dynastic sequence through numismatic tools such as die studies, provide the basis for empirical comparison with glyptic or sphragistic representations. However, the approach has produced uneven results in practice, precisely because the comparative material *was not* understood on its own merits before being used. This chapter proposes to evaluate the use of coins as comparanda to identify glyptic royal portraits, to present guidelines based on a better understanding of numismatic practices, and to apply the method to a case study. The results allow an evaluation the concept of types and its pertinence in the Hellenistic period.

#### **Portrait identification and the use of coinage**

Some preliminary remarks concerning portrait identification are necessary since naming the subject always represents the ultimate goal but the methods and their limits vary considerably. In the case of sculpture, the task is sometimes as straightforward as finding a copy inscribed with a name. When no such inscription is available, other approaches have been used to redress what is often perceived as a great injustice, i.e., the loss of identity. Additional clues include quotations attributed to the person represented or descriptions of their deeds, modern

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<sup>73</sup> Plantzos 1999, 2.

drawings recording lost inscriptions (often due to overzealous cleaning), pairings in double herms, popularity of the type, and findspots.<sup>74</sup> Figural types and iconography also offer pointers as to the social status of the person portrayed.<sup>75</sup> A different approach, now discredited, associated traits of character “perceived” in a physiognomy with literary descriptions and biographies of known historical figures, resulting in a wide range of proposed identifications and some embarrassing reversals.<sup>76</sup>

Unfortunately most of the techniques described above cannot be applied to identify the great majority of engraved portraits. Gems are rarely inscribed and when they are, the inscriptions represent artists’ signatures rather than “labels.”<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, the glyptic format strips much of the information that could be gathered from body types and postures. We are left with a final method: the comparison with numismatic portraits. Consequently, only a small fraction of the corpus can be identified with certainty, i.e., royal portraits closely resembling numismatic types. Any engraved portrait that does not include traditional markers of royalty such as the diadem (a band of cloth tied around the head) and in some rare cases other types of headgear, as discussed below, cannot be identified with any level of certainty.<sup>78</sup> Secondary elements can help in the identification of such portraits, but they should be used with caution. Iconographical and stylistic clues such as the widening of diadems in the late Hellenistic period and a dynastic family resemblance—for instance the bloated profiles and bulging eyes of many Ptolemaic rulers—can point to a specific chronological bracket or geographical origin. Identifications outside these parameters have resulted in fragile proposals and rampant linguistic slippage from “possible” to “probable” and ultimately the abandonment of any such qualifiers.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Richter 1965a, 14–7.

<sup>75</sup> Smith 1993; Zanker 1995.

<sup>76</sup> I will only mention the case of Menander because it is exemplary, but the list of chronically misidentified portraits is long. A portrait type known in more than fifty copies was identified either as the Greek comic playwright Menander (on account of two inscribed *imagines clipeatae*) or as the Roman poet Virgil (based on stylistic arguments). The controversy was settled in the early 1970s when Bernard Ashmole recognized an inscription identifying the Greek author on a small bronze bust of the same type in the J. Paul Getty Museum. For references, see Richter and Smith 1984, 160.

<sup>77</sup> For a list of signatures and commentary, see Richter 1968, 14–9; Zazoff 1983, 101–2, 132–41, 205–8, 316–23, 439–40; Zwieler-Diehl 2005; 2007, 109–37, 549–50; Marvin 2008, 186–9; Vollkommer 2014, 130; Hurwit 2015, 33–8.

<sup>78</sup> For discussions of the origins and use of the diadem, see Lichtenberger et al. 2012.

<sup>79</sup> For an example, see the successive identifications proposed for a garnet intaglio in Baltimore signed by Apollonios, and two sealings—possibly related—from Kallipolis: the Bosporan king Asander, an uncertain ruler from the same kingdom, the Seleukid minister Hermeias, the Athenian statesman Echedemos, a courtier, etc. For summaries with further references, see Pantos 1989; Messina 2012. I do not believe that the Kallipolis sealings can be associated with the intaglio with any certainty because of their fragmentary state (only the upper part is preserved in both cases, showing only some curls and part of an eye or upper forehead). Although both sealings were impressed with the same seal, I do not believe, as opposed to

Numismatic comparison itself is not without its difficulties. One of the best illustrations of the method's pitfalls is found in Marie-Louise Vollenweider's catalogue of ancient cameos and intaglios held in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris.<sup>80</sup> Few people other than the grande dame of glyptic studies of the twentieth century could describe with more expressivity the engraved faces housed in the drawers of the Cabinet. Describing a cameo portrait that she identifies as Ptolemaios VIII (pl. 8.1), Vollenweider writes:

It is not difficult to discover the name of the person whose bust is represented on this cameo. The series of highly expressive numismatic effigies he left behind is compelling. However, the medallion bust shows a more mature image, the roundness of the cheek stretching down to the neck, but the profile reveals the same features, albeit more pronounced, such as the slightly receding forehead, the oblique nose with a plunging tip. In contrast with the representation of a globular eye, of a sharp but cautious appearance, the gem carver remained more understated; the curve of the cheek is carefully defined, just as the round neck with its thin folds, full hair peeking under the helmet or *kausia*; the nape covered; sickle-shaped locks spreading over the temple and curving upwards over the forehead. . . .

Let us reiterate that the represented person resembles, *without any doubt* [italics supplied], Ptolemaios VIII Euergetes, later called Physkon because of his obesity, the younger brother of Ptolemaios VI Philometor, but younger than on a series more modest than his numismatic portraits. Nevertheless, the physiognomy is distinct, and so is the state of mind revealed in the appearance of a frustrated man.<sup>81</sup>

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Pantos, that they could have been made with the Baltimore intaglio. The sealings are too small, even taking into consideration high clay shrinkage. Furthermore, the patterns of ringlets do not align when compared carefully. The hairstyle on the sealings is indeed unusual and comparable to that on the Baltimore gem. However, the fragmentary state of the sealings precludes any further conclusion.

<sup>80</sup> Vollenweider 1995. For criticism of the work from a historical and numismatic perspective, see Callataÿ 1997.

<sup>81</sup> Vollenweider 1995, 123–4, no. 114. Author's translation. "Il n'est pas difficile de déceler le nom du personnage dont le buste est représenté sur ce camée. La série d'effigies monétaires très expressives qu'il nous a laissée est parlante. Le buste métallique révèle cependant une image d'un âge plus avancé, la rondeur de la joue s'étalant jusqu'au cou, mais le profil accuse les mêmes traits, marqués cependant davantage, tel le front à peine fuyant, la naissance du nez oblique, la pointe plongeante. En contraste avec l'image de l'œil globuleux, d'un aspect vif mais réservé, le graveur est resté plutôt discret, le galbe de la joue est soigneusement marqué, de même que le cou arrondi orné de plis fins ; une ample chevelure avançant sous le casque ou la *causia*. garnit [*sic*] la nuque, des faucilles de mèches couvrent une partie de la tempe et s'enroulent, en haut, sur le front. . . .

Rappelons que le personnage représenté se compare indubitablement à Ptolémée VIII Evergète, appelé plus tard Physkon à cause de son obésité, le frère cadet de Ptolémée VI Philométôr, mais

Before reviewing the numismatic evidence, one should note the dangers of slipping from evocative description into anachronistic, psychological interpretation. The official nature of numismatic portraiture with the ruler himself as the ultimate source of the commission—even in the case of coinage minted by free cities—must rule out any and all negative judgments based on inferential psychologizing of the portrait’s physiognomy. Although the present-day viewer may interpret this particular profile as that of a “frustrated man,” this reading is colored by modern expectations that a portrait should convey “psychology and inner life.”<sup>82</sup> *Pathos* certainly came to permeate the visual language of portraiture to a new extent in the Hellenistic period, giving representations more life-like qualities. Yet the aim was not so much truth to the individual as “adequation,” or as Andrew Stewart defines it “the need to tailor the portrait mode to the truth of the subject represented.”<sup>83</sup> No ancient ruler would have wanted to be depicted as anything other than completely competent and in control.

The identification of the ruler depicted on the cameo as Ptolemaios VIII is far less certain than Vollenweider proclaims on the basis of the numismatic comparison (pl. 8.2). At a purely physiognomic level, the lower halves of the profiles compare rather well, but the upper parts do not. A series of gold octadrachms representing Ptolemaios III with a prominent forelock and smoother forehead than his descendant could just as well have been used as comparanda (pl. 9.1). But the type was called upon earlier in the catalogue to support the identification of a male head wearing a *petasos* and *chlamys* as Ptolemaios III assimilated to Hermes (pl. 9.2).<sup>84</sup>

In another catalogue entry for a clay sealing with a portrait identified as Seleukos IV (pl. 10.1), Vollenweider writes, “Despite some dissimilarities due to the personal style of an artist seeking a veristic representation, this portrait indubitably represents Seleukos IV. Even if the numismatic effigies usually show younger features, the structure of the massive head with its well-defined particularities remains the same.”<sup>85</sup> Although discrepancies between numismatic and sphragistic portraits are acknowledged, no methodological doubts emerge. Yet the physiognomic diversity among portraits struck under the authority of Seleukos IV is obvious

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d’un âge moins avancé que celui qui s’annonce sur une série plus modeste que celle des effigies monétaires. L’expression physiologique est cependant marquée, même l’état d’âme qui se révèle dans l’aspect d’un homme frustré.”

<sup>82</sup> Giard 1995, 14. “Psychologie et vie intérieure: Marie-Louise Vollenweider s’efforce toujours de bien démêler l’écheveau de cet ensemble compliqué. Mais elle évite de confondre Antiquité et temps modernes. . . . Pour Marie-Louise Vollenweider, le “visage parle” et elle en comprend parfaitement le langage. Dans la tradition de E. Kris, elle nous offre une représentation extrêmement vivante et captivante du monde antique.”

<sup>83</sup> For a discussion of “truth” in Hellenistic sculpture, see Stewart 2007; Adornato 2015. For an example of the discrepancy between ancient and modern readings of portraits, see Smith 2015, 106.

<sup>84</sup> Vollenweider 1995, 75–6, no. 58.

<sup>85</sup> Vollenweider 1995, 169, no. 174. Author’s translation. “Malgré certaines dissemblances résultant du dessin individuel d’un artiste aspirant à une interprétation véridique, ce portrait représente indubitablement Séleucus IV. Si les effigies monétaires révèlent généralement des traits plus jeunes, la structure de la tête massive aux particularités bien définies reste la même.”



when comparing a sample of four coins. Two were struck at the same mint but all with different obverse dies, a die being the metallic piece engraved with a negative design to be transferred onto the coin blank with the blow of a hammer (pl. 10.2). Here lies the greatest difficulty of this approach: even when coins are securely associated with a specific ruler, individual features of the portrait vary widely from one specimen to the next due to the different “hands” involved in carving dies. Too many proponents of the method are guilty of picking and choosing whichever numismatic representation suits them best.

Misuses of the method are not the sole prerogative of glyptic studies. A two-pronged approach mixing numismatic comparison and stylistic dating has also been used in the study of royal portrait sculpture. Stylistic dating will not be discussed here since it has long been recognized that in the study of Hellenistic sculpture, the method should only be applied with the greatest circumspection.<sup>86</sup> Likewise, portraiture cannot be assumed to have followed a linear development on which one could map the entire corpus like dots on a coordinate grid by increments of ten to twenty-five years, although many have tried. This applies equally to glyptic portraits.<sup>87</sup> First, even though the corpus of glyptic and sphragistic portraits is much greater than those in the round, we do not possess enough independently dated works to build a solid framework for stylistic dating. Second, style is a matter of choice and genre rather than periodicity in the Hellenistic era.

Numismatic comparison has a checkered history in the study of sculpture. While specialists in the medium tend to be more cautious because they are forced to wrestle with the difficulties of comparing two very different media, confusion arises from the peculiar seriality of coins and the idiosyncrasies of numismatic terminology. For one thing, a die can only strike so many coin blanks before it has to be “retired” either because the design has lost its sharpness or because the whole piece breaks.<sup>88</sup> What is more, the dies used for a specific coinage were engraved by a series of die-cutters (see discussion of pl. 11 below). Thus, not all coins present

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<sup>86</sup> Although some still believe that independent stylistic dating is possible in the Hellenistic period, J.J. Pollitt (1986, 265–71) already put the idea to rest in his 1986 textbook.

<sup>87</sup> For examples of identification and date based on style, see Vollenweider 1995, 983–4, no. 67 (Ptolemaios V as a child assimilated to Harpocrates); 97–8, no. 82 (his mother Arsinoe III); 158, no. 157 (Ptolemaios XII). One of the most extreme examples is the identification of the last Antigonid kind, Perseus, in a bust—shown from a three-quarter from the back view—of a mature, bearded man wearing a *kausia* and *aegis*, and wielding a spear (Vollenweider 1995, 184–5, no. 201). Dodging any numismatic justification with a simple bibliographic reference, Vollenweider not only fails to explain why Perseus should be recognized—Gisela Richter saw Phillip V—but also constructs an entire tale around the engraver, a son of Perseus, who captured the bitterness (“amertume”) of an eye who has seen it all (“L’oeil aurait alors ‘tout vu’.”).

<sup>88</sup> There has been much debate concerning the “life expectancy” of dies. Estimates range between 10,000 and 40,000 coins per obverse die. A reverse die wore faster because it was held in the hand as a punch while the obverse was snugly fitted to the anvil. A variety of factors can impact the lifespan of a die, including quality of the piece and the engraving, skill level of the worker wielding the hammer, availability of die-cutters, pace of production, etc. For a summary of the debate, see Callataÿ 2011, 7–13.

the same exact portrait, even if they were struck in the same issue (an ensemble of numismatic material with the same design produced at a specific time and mint from successive die pairs).<sup>89</sup>

To account for the deviations between numismatic representations of the same ruler, Gisela Richter proposed that “the original portrait created for the *first coin type* [added emphasis] is the important one.” However, she does not explain discrepancies within the same type and adds, “I have therefore selected what seemed to me *artistically* [added emphasis] the most interesting type, preferably the earliest in date.”<sup>90</sup> This approach makes clear the problems that arise from the polysemy of the term “type” depending on media and the choice of quality as a criterion for selection. In numismatics, “type” refers to a group of coins featuring the same basic design on their obverse and reverse, but the same type could be minted in faraway mints for decades and even centuries in some rare cases. If Richter’s idea is to select the first instance of a numismatic *portrait type*, her terminology fails her. Her artistic standard—high quality and sense of individualism seen in a particular die as she explains later—also falls short. Christof Boehringer also posits that portrait types of superior artistry found on Hellenistic coinages should be associated with the original prototypes.<sup>91</sup> However, die studies show that levels of craftsmanship are not arranged from best to worst throughout the sequence of dies or issues of a particular portrait type.<sup>92</sup>

R.R.R. Smith has more generally criticized the method of comparing numismatic types with portraits in the round for its false assumption of equivalence. “Lack of differentiation of the various contexts and functions of royal statues has led to a simplistic view of the relationship between coin portraits and sculptured portraits: there is no *necessary* connection between them.”<sup>93</sup> It is precisely the relations between media, particularly between numismatic and glyptic, that lie at the heart of this chapter.

### **Are all dies created equal?**

While Smith convincingly questions the connection between numismatic and sculptured portraits, similarities between gems and coins beg for further inquiry. The basic pictorial language and techniques of coins and gems are strikingly similar: the dominant format is a miniature profile head looking to the right, engraved in the negative on hard materials.<sup>94</sup> Both

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<sup>89</sup> Because obverse dies last longer than reverse punches, creating overlaps in the pairings, the whole sequence can usually be reconstructed and used to recover data linked to the production from original output to chronology, etc. This is the method and purpose of a die study.

<sup>90</sup> Richter 1965a, 252.

<sup>91</sup> Boehringer 1972, 77–80.

<sup>92</sup> Houghton and Lorber 2002, 357–60.

<sup>93</sup> Smith 1988, 3.

<sup>94</sup> For brief discussions of the poorly documented relations between gem and die engravers, see Hackens 1989; Plantzos 1999, 64–5; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 78–80. Although it is reasonable to think that both crafts could be—and probably were—mastered by the same artists, their respective carving techniques are in fact quite different. While burins must be extremely hard and sharp in order to cut into a die, a variety of materials (from leather and reed to metals) can be

media are also eminently portable and have practical functions in society. Furthermore, a paradox emerges in the principle of portrait identification through coins as defined by Smith, “If a sculptured portrait copies, or can be seen to be based on, the same portrait type as appears consistently on coins, that is, on coins made from different dies of a single issue or (better) of different issues, then the coins can prove the identification.” But if there were no fixed official types of Hellenistic ruler portraits as understood in Imperial portraiture, as Smith argues, why should we expect or require consistency across numismatic issues?<sup>95</sup> And without serial conformity as our touchstone, would we not be guilty of the same sin decried above, cherry-picking the coin that suits us most for comparison? The premises of the argument need to be examined.

Indeed, it seems that we are influenced by our modern understanding of portraiture, i.e., that particularism means individualism. In other words, we expect portraits to be consistent because they preserve the physical features of the person represented.<sup>96</sup> Our expectation has shifted from uniformity within an official type to something closer to verisimilitude. Numismatic portraits could only be deemed valid as identification tools if they are consistent across issues because they refer to an individual. However, as ancient sources tell us, the greatest Hellenistic portraitists such as Lysippos and his brother Lysistratos *improved* upon physical likeness.<sup>97</sup> Alexander allegedly issued an edict stipulating that only Lysippos could create a sculpture of the king “for he alone, it seemed, brought out his real character in the bronze, and expressed his excellence in the modeling of his appearance. For the others, in their eagerness to represent his twisted neck and melting, limpid eyes, were unable to preserve his virile and leonine demeanor.”<sup>98</sup> The same artistic qualities probably characterized the works of the “official”

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used in gem carving. There, the tools are mostly used as “carrying agents” for the slurry composed of an abrasive powder and lubricant (often corundum powder and olive oil). Some scholars have too hastily associated gem carvers and die engravers on account of fragmentary and misunderstood signatures and monograms. The topic needs to be approached with great caution in the absence of any systematic study to date.

<sup>95</sup> Although he remains cautious because of the fragmentary state of the evidence, Smith (1988, 29) states, “The few ‘type’ portraits are not nearly so closely ‘fixed’ as most imperial copies of official portrait models; and the number of good quality ‘non-type’ portraits shows that official models were not felt necessary in some contexts (though what those contexts were is not clear).”

<sup>96</sup> Didi-Huberman 1998.

<sup>97</sup> Quint. *Inst.* 12.10.9. “Lysippos and Praxiteles are said to have achieved the best approximation of reality.” Plin. *HN* 35.153. “The first person who copied human features by fitting a mold of plaster upon the face, and then improving it by pouring melted wax into the cast, was Lysistratos of Sikyon, brother of Lysippos, already mentioned.” Translations adapted from Loeb.

<sup>98</sup> Plut. *De Alex. fort.* 2.2 (*Mor.* 335b). Translation adapted from Stewart 1993.

μόνος γὰρ οὗτος, ὡς ἔοικε, κατεμήνυε τῷ χαλκῷ τὸ ἦθος αὐτοῦ καὶ συνεξέφαινε τῇ μορφῇ τὴν ἀρετήν: οἱ δ' ἄλλοι τὴν ἀποστροφὴν τοῦ τραχήλου καὶ τῶν ὀμμάτων τὴν διάχυσιν καὶ ὑγρότητα μιμεῖσθαι θέλοντες οὐ διεφύλαττον αὐτοῦ τὸ ἀρρενωπὸν καὶ λεοντώδες.

painter and gem engraver appointed by the king, Apelles and Pyrgoteles.<sup>99</sup> If we consider that propriety and *ethos* were the main concerns of Hellenistic royal portraiture, then we can understand how the same prototype could be selectively inflected in its details such as features, surface treatments, etc. Thus, the expectation of physiognomic consistency across numismatic types and issues starts to unravel, particularly in the case of a copying process as intensive throughout time and space as die making.

I propose to seek a solution to the question whether all issues and dies were made equal in the study of mint practices. We know that coinages of the same type were produced for decades and minted at distant locations. Since no strict adherence to a model sanctioned by the authorities is evidenced among issues and individual dies, we must deduce that different engravers were not expected to replicate a specific model presenting the same treatment of individual features down to the placement of individual locks, i.e., a “portrait type” in the Roman sense. Successive generations of engravers were probably given a sample of older coins, and possibly dies (if they were kept), and asked to manufacture replicas to the best of their ability.

The findings of a die study of a coinage minted at Susa under the authority of Seleukos I at the end of the fourth century B.C. clearly illustrate the contingency and heterogeneity of the minting process within a single issue (pl. 11).<sup>100</sup> The physiognomy of the helmeted male head, probably Seleukos I himself, is inconsistent across the twenty-six tetradrachm dies, which is all the more surprising that the type was minted at a single location for a relatively short period, probably only a few years and certainly no more than a decade. The sequence of obverses shows clusters of stylistically related dies and cycles in recurring iconographical elements. No less than five stylistic groups (A–E) can be distinguished, probably attributable to individual hands, some more skilled than others. The engravers were clearly not working from a portrait type to be copied precisely. Nor were the best die cutters employed *first*. The two dies of group D, quite late in the sequence, are often considered the most artistically accomplished of the lot, with their subtle treatment of surfaces such as the hardness of the cheekbone contrasting with the soft fold of skin on the side of the nose. Furthermore, iconographical patterns, such as the rendering of the panther skin tied around the neck, reappear at intervals, demonstrating that the engravers were not working from a common model but rather from older dies or coins. The earliest and latest dies show a pleated animal skin (groups A, B, and E), but a version with panther spots mirroring those on the helmet appears in the middle of the sequence (groups C and D). Thus, the stemma of the copying process is not strictly linear and the aesthetic quality of a particular die cannot be used as a criterion for selection.

While individual die engravers were not compelled to meet any particular standard of replication, the original design or prototype of a new coin type must have been conceived with some oversight and input from the minting authorities.<sup>101</sup> Ancient coinage displays great

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<sup>99</sup> For a commentary on the different versions of the “edict” and works by the three artists, see Stewart 1993, 26–41.

<sup>100</sup> Marest-Caffey 2016.

<sup>101</sup> We have no evidence concerning the exact mechanism of this “oversight.” A written order specifying certain characteristics, particularly iconographic, of the commissioned portrait could have been issued. We can hypothesize that the king or his administration then appraised

conservatism because the permanence of recognizable designs instills confidence in users. The design of the “Alexanders,” with a youthful Herakles wearing a lion skin on the obverse and an enthroned Zeus on the reverse, remained constant in its main features for about a century and a half after its introduction by Alexander the Great and represented the most widely used currency of the period. A new design, particularly a royal portrait, would not have been taken lightly and left to the whim of the die cutters; its iconography would have been carefully chosen and crafted. Although we do not possess any testimony concerning the daily activities at a mint or the process involved in the creation of a new numismatic type, literary and numismatic evidence shows that the ruler maintained direct oversight over important mints. A letter preserved on an Egyptian papyrus dated from 258 B.C. from a mint official named Demetrios to Apollonios, the *dioiketes* who presided over financial affairs under Ptolemaios II, indicates that the Alexandrian mint was taking orders directly from the king through his delegate.<sup>102</sup> Other literary evidence suggests that the king was personally invested in the creation of royal images. A passage in Athenaios credits Ptolemaios II with the invention of the double cornucopia as his wife Arsinoe II’s defining attribute in sculpture.<sup>103</sup>

Given this revised understanding of the numismatic medium, we should not be seeking consistency across issues or dies—although this can happen—but rather *closeness to the prototype*. Any method using comparison with numismatic types for portrait identification should select comparanda based on the following principles. Selected dies should be as close as possible to the prototype *chronologically and geographically*.<sup>104</sup> The best die is always the first (principle 1c, below). Using the other principles in tandem not only reduces the pool of types and issues but also offers alternative candidates in case the first die has not yet been identified.<sup>105</sup>

(1) Chronological criteria:

(a) Novelty. Particular care and official approval would have been given to the creation of new numismatic types, particularly in the case of a completely new iconography. Both obverses and reverses conveyed elements of self-promotion based on divine pretensions, dynastic legitimacy, and military might, among other key

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prototypes. Pliny (*HN* 35.86) relates that Alexander the Great would often visit the studio of the painter Apelles.

<sup>102</sup> *P. Cair. Zen.* I 59021. For a commentary, see Le Rider 1986, 49–51. Concerning Apollonios, a well-known high-ranking official in the entourage of Ptolemaios II, see Préaux 1947; Bingen 2007, 191–3.

<sup>103</sup> *Ath.* 11.497b–c.

<sup>104</sup> Arthur Houghton used some of the same principles, mainly the first die, in a series of 1980s article discussing late Seleukid coinages, but never presented a working method. Using dated issues from Tarsus, Antiocheia on the Orontes, Ake-Ptolemais, and Damascus, Houghton (1984) identified a marble head in the Antakya Museum as Antiochos IX. The evolution of the ruler’s portraiture was presented as rather consistent across the early portraits at the most important mints. Houghton (1987, 83; 1988, 92–3) later introduced the idea that only the first die of a series was “engraved with reference to the subjects themselves.”

<sup>105</sup> Many coinages have not yet been the subject of die studies because the process is extremely time-consuming.

aspects of Hellenistic kingship, which were deliberately curated. Replacing the portrait of a ruler with that of his successor became customary by the late third century B.C. But altering the dynastic iconography, by adding divine attributes on the obverse and/or introducing a new divinity or scene on the reverse, would have been considered a radical change in an inherently conservative medium and would have necessitated the direct input of the ruler.

(b) Typology. The earliest issue of a ruler portrait type must take precedence over later iterations. By the same principle, presented above, engravers working on a new type would have been referred to some kind of model or prototype. Even though a type might have been new at a certain mint, it may have already been issued in another. In this case, the model could conceivably be a random coin from an earlier issue.<sup>106</sup> It is thus essential to identify the earliest portrait type.

(c) Die. Whenever such information is available, the first die of an issue or portrait type should *always* be preferred since it is the most likely instance of close correspondence to the prototype.

(2) Geographical criteria:

(a) Mint. Coins issued at royal mints should be preferred over their municipal or quasi-municipal counterparts by the same principle applied to provincial portraits in the case of Imperial portraiture. Some cities were granted the right to mint their own coinage and would have had some control over the designs.<sup>107</sup> Yet the most important mints of an empire, usually distinguished by their large output, tend to present the fullest extent of successive portrait types (often with gradually aging features), showing that the central administration had a tighter grip on the iconographical program of such mints.

(b) Court. Geographic proximity to the court had an impact on the implementation and transmission of designs.<sup>108</sup> Mints located in capitals probably had better access to prototypes.

(c) Location of important historical events. Some issues look commemorative and were probably distributed as donatives to prospective allies and members of the court in specific occasions such as accessions, victories, or weddings. Their iconography can be innovative, which corresponds to principle 1a.

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<sup>106</sup> The authors of *Seleucid Coins* (Houghton and Lorber 2002, 358) propose that in some cases simple written instructions may have been given and could account for the deviations among portraits of the same ruler. I doubt it is easier to send an ekphrastic order than to include a hasty sketch or a sample coin or die.

<sup>107</sup> For an example of minting rights granted to Phoenician cities, see Hoover 2005.

<sup>108</sup> See the example of a posthumous portrait of Seleukos I minted by his son Antiochos I, presented below.

## Coins and seals: Seleukid portraits in the archive of Seleukeia on the Tigris

It would be too ambitious to apply the working principles presented above throughout the whole chronological and geographical span of the material at hand. We need a published test group with a certain number of closely related portraits. Their provenance should be well documented to build a solid framework. Excavated sealing archives emerge as the best candidates since they usually focus on a specific dynasty (Appendix A).<sup>109</sup> By selecting such material, we eliminate some of the methodological and practical difficulties posed by the scattered, unprovenanced nature of most gem collections. Archives were public or private repositories of sealed documents whose original, organic support—papyrus in most cases but sometimes parchment too—has decomposed or been destroyed, leaving only the sealings as archaeological remains.

The archive found at Seleukeia on the Tigris promises to be the most fruitful, for three main reasons. First, it was discovered during a series of well-documented and relatively recent excavation seasons. Second, it is published in its entirety, which is the exception rather than the rule, as presented in Appendix A. Finally, Seleukid numismatics have been extensively researched and published in the last decades, although some important die studies are still in progress.<sup>110</sup>

The ruler portraits featured in the archive of Seleukeia are of particular interest since very few Seleukid portraits in the round are preserved. Furthermore, several scholars have attempted to identify Seleukid numismatic prototypes, but their methods are problematic. In his study, Robert Fleischer states that no more than seven portraits in the round can be identified, while thirty-two rulers or usurpers appear on Seleukid coins.<sup>111</sup> He never clearly explains his criteria for selecting numismatic types for comparison but seems to use a mixed method based mainly on consistency across issues with a preference for early types. Earlier, Christof Boehringer used in his study of Antiochos III's portraiture a different method based on style and quality of craftsmanship in which "the first coin of a stylistic series becomes the prototype."<sup>112</sup> His "Stilserie" is a typological tool to be distinguished from a die-linked sequence of coins. Indeed, Boehringer posited that the most artful numismatic portrait was chronologically closer to the prototype. I have demonstrated above that die studies contradict this assertion. Other authors have used similar methods adapted to the geographical focus of their study.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Fleischer 1996.

<sup>110</sup> Houghton and Lorber 2002; Houghton et al. 2008. Arthur Houghton and Oliver Hoover are working on a series of late Seleukid die studies of great importance for sorting the sequence of some numismatic portraits. They were generous enough to share their findings with me before publication.

<sup>111</sup> Fleischer 1991, 1.

<sup>112</sup> Boehringer 1972, 77–8.

<sup>113</sup> Helmut Kyrieleis (1975; 2015, 29) does not clearly explain his method, but acknowledges the difficulties of applying it to Ptolemaic rulers because of the patchy nature of their numismatic portraiture. Pantos A. Pantos (1996, 189) used a mixed method to study the Kallipolis sealings. There, the difficulty was compounded by the loss of essential iconographical markers such as the diadem because of the poor state of preservation of many sealings.

The sealings of the public archive of Seleukeia on the Tigris were uncovered between 1967 and 1972 by an Italian team from the University of Turin.<sup>114</sup> Unlike other hoards discovered in secondary contexts, the archive was found *in situ* on the floor of one of the largest Hellenistic archival buildings discovered to this day. It contains over 25,000 clay sealings and 30,000 impressions made with over 6,000 individual seals (also called matrices).<sup>115</sup> Among these, possibly as many as 1331 matrices display a portrait or some generalized head, but only a fraction, 95 types, were identified as Hellenistic rulers by the authors of the publication.<sup>116</sup> The latter include mostly diademed portraits and other identifiable royal profiles wearing a *kausia* (Macedonian beret-like hat), helmet, or *exuviae* (animal skin). A dozen do not present any royal insignia and are too generic or fragmentary to be confidently labeled as “rulers.”<sup>117</sup> Four heads wearing a *kyrbasia* (a soft, cone-shaped cap with lappets covering the neck and cheeks of Near Eastern origins), probably satraps, were also listed under the heading.<sup>118</sup>

The chronological span of the archive covers a long period stretching from the beginning of the Seleukid rule over Mesopotamia to its decline, between the reign of Antiochos I and the short-lived second rule of Demetrios II, i.e., between 281 and 125 B.C. (see Appendix B for a list of Seleukid rulers and dates). A *terminus ante quem* of 256/5 B.C. for the opening of the archive is provided by an impressed administrative stamp inscribed with the Seleukid Era date of 56. The portraits found among the sealings again support the dating (pls. 12–16). The earliest identified portrait is a deified, bull-horned representation of Seleukos I, a type struck on the obverse of several numismatic issues minted posthumously by his son Antiochos I (pl. 12, Se 1–2; pl. 17, “Seleukos I, Posthumous”). The closure of the archive—caused by a fire—can be dated by two chronological markers.<sup>119</sup> Several administrative stamps are inscribed with the date 158 of the Seleukid Era, i.e., 154/3 B.C. The fire probably occurred relatively soon after that date, a conclusion supported by the identification of the last represented ruler as Demetrios II at the time of his second reign (pl. 16, Se 47–48).

The editors of the archive, Vita Messina and Paolo Mollo, identify fifty-one matrices as representing Seleukid portraits and recognize eight different dynasts from Seleukos I to Demetrios II with some lacunae in the dynastic sequence.<sup>120</sup> They use the traditional method of physiognomic comparison with numismatic portraits with the added control that there should be an agreement between the authors. They state that they feel secure in their identification of two portraits of Seleukos I (Se 1–2), three of Antiochos I (Se 4–6), two of Seleukos II (Se 7–8), seven of Antiochos III (Se 13–19), two of Antiochos, the son of Antiochos III and Laodice (Se 26–27), eight of Seleukos IV (Se 30–37), two of Antiochos IV (Se 40–41), two of Demetrios I

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<sup>114</sup> Only the public archive is discussed here, but two much smaller hoards of sealings have also been excavated in the same city (see Appendix A).

<sup>115</sup> Sigillographic vocabulary is complex. Appendix A should be consulted for a definition of sealing, matrix, impression, etc.

<sup>116</sup> Messina and Mollo 2004, nos. Al 1–6, Se 1–51, La 1–3, Ca 1, Pn 1, Ba 1, Dh 1, Re 1–31.

<sup>117</sup> Messina and Mollo 2004, nos. Al 3–6; Se 6; Pn 1; Dh 1; Re 7, 11, 25, 28–30.

<sup>118</sup> Messina and Mollo 2004, nos. Se 50, 51; Ca 1; Re 9.

<sup>119</sup> Messina 2006a, 66–9.

<sup>120</sup> Messina and Mollo 2004, 35.



(Se 42–43), and two of Demetrios II during his second reign (Se 47–48). This sample offers adequate grounds to test the guidelines provided above and understand the relationship between numismatic types and glyptic portraits. At the heart of the present case study lies the following question: what are the results of portrait identification when specific criteria based on a better understanding of numismatic material are used?

We begin with a set of numismatic portraits selected from Seleukid coins from Seleukos I through the second reign of Demetrios II using the working principles presented above (pls. 17–19). For the sake of brevity, I will not go through the process of selecting each type and die. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the criteria used to select each numismatic portrait.<sup>121</sup> We can compare the selection with the fifty-one seal types in the archive of Seleukeia identified as Seleukid by Messina and Mollo (table 2). At first, the test should rely solely on physiognomy and iconography, without the possible influence of the Seleukid Era dates (henceforth S.E.) associated with some specimens or the results of the previous study. In this way, we can evaluate the method in its most basic application. Later, empirical identifications can be re-evaluated against previous conclusions and other evidence.

Interesting data emerge from the experiment. First, seventeen seal types, or one third of the sample, must remain unidentified, while Messina and Mollo propose a name for all the portraits, except for two “satraps” (Se 50 and 51). Second, my proposed identifications diverge from those of Messina and Mollo in seven instances—or about 21% of cases. Third, the attributions proposed in the present study show more diversity, despite the lower rate of identification. This fact is interesting since during the period covered by the archive (before 256–after 129 B.C.) twenty Seleukid rulers could have appeared on the sealings, some with more degree of likelihood than others (Appendix B).<sup>122</sup> The authors of the catalogue only identify nine possible rulers, excluding the identification of the son of Antiochos III Megas (Se 26-29).<sup>123</sup> I

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<sup>121</sup> The selected numismatic portraits are designated by their *SC* numbers, the standard reference on Seleukid coinage. The plates are organized by ruler and types are presented in chronological order. *Seleucid Coins* was designed for numismatic rather than iconographical needs and thus follows a different order, i.e., ruler-mint-denomination-sequence.

<sup>122</sup> The twenty rulers include members of the Seleukid dynasty as well as usurpers (Appendix B). Some kings only ruled in the western part of the empire and are unlikely to appear in the archive of Seleukeia on the Tigris. As for whether usurpers could appear in official documents, it seems possible. Indeed, as demonstrated in Chapter 5, ruler portraits were not used primarily by the administration. Any private contract sealed with the image of a usurper would still have to be recorded and honored by the local administration. Among the factors impacting probabilities for some rulers to feature in the archive are duration of reign, geographical range of controlled territory, status, etc. Other portraits could appear such as those of designated successors, but they cannot be identified using numismatic comparanda since they are not traditionally represented on coins.

<sup>123</sup> The son of Antiochos III is excluded on the ground that his portrait is not attested *on any* coins. Messina and Mollo (2004, 42) identified the jugate portraits on several matrices (Se 26-29) as the son of Antiochos III and the queen Laodike on the basis of dates stamped on the sealings.

propose eleven possible identifications although a third of the sample remains unidentified. Statistics would indeed support a wider range of possibilities, especially since at least twelve rulers and two usurpers struck coins at Seleukeia (Appendix B). The following pages discuss in detail the matrices with Seleukid portraits that can be identified with some degree of certainty using the guidelines presented above.

Matrices Se 1 and 2 (pl. 12), identified as Seleukos I Nikator, offer a unique case in the sample inasmuch as the portrait does not only present the diadem common to most Hellenistic ruler portraiture but also an uncommon attribute in the form of a bull's horn adorning the king's temple. The same iconography is found on a series of gold and silver coinages issued posthumously (ca. 281–274 B.C.) by his son and successor, Antiochos I Soter, and by the Pergamene ruler and once Seleukid ally Philetairos.<sup>124</sup> The identification is independently supported by the presence of administrative stamps dated S.E. 73–100 (240/39 to 213/2 B.C.) on the same sealings as Se 1 was impressed. It is hardly surprising that the city founder of Seleukeia on the Tigris should be chosen as the device for the seal of local officials, the *chreophylakes*, as indicated by the inscription reading vertically at the back of the head.<sup>125</sup> Since the numismatic portrait predates the matrix by several decades, we can conclude that numismatic types could represent sources of inspiration for official seal makers and possibly other gem engravers.<sup>126</sup>

The case of Seleukos' deified portrait allows us to examine in more detail the connection between the physical location of the ruler and diffusion of numismatic portrait types. The authors of *Seleucid Coins* have noted that iconographical innovations of Antiochos' coinage follow the location of the court, confirming principle 2b presented above.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, the horned portrait of Seleukos was struck at two different mints, staggered through time. Soon after the assassination of his father in 281 B.C., Antiochos, already co-regent and residing in the far eastern part of the empire, issued the horned portrait on gold and silver coinages at an uncertain Baktrian location, probably a subsidiary of the Baktra/Aï Khanoum mint (pl. 17, *SC* 471).<sup>128</sup> The relocation of Antiochos to Sardis ca. 276 B.C., driven by western threats, corresponds with the beginning of the type's production at Sardis. The shift from a Near Eastern-inspired composite perspective with one horn pointing backwards and the other forwards as if represented frontally, to a Greek representational paradigm with both appendages represented in profile (pl. 17, *SC* 323.1b) supports the geographical transfer of the portrait from east to west along with the court. Once minted at Sardis, the facial features were first altered (pl. 17, *SC* 322). Later, when a new reverse type was introduced, the portrait was rejuvenated and the configuration of the horns was altered (pl. 17, *SC* 323.1b).

Matrix Se 3 (pl. 12) could not be matched with any degree of certainty to a numismatic portrait due to the fragmentary nature of the impression. The bulging eyebrow, pronounced, high cheekbone, and strong jaw are however characteristic of the portraits of both Seleukos I and Antiochos I. The inscription, indicating that the seal belonged to the same office using matrices

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<sup>124</sup> For discussion of the dating, see Houghton and Lorber 2002, 119–20, 123–4, 160–1.

<sup>125</sup> The *chreophylakes* may have been in charge of local finances (see *infra* n. 368).

<sup>126</sup> However, no extant engraved gem bears the same device to my knowledge.

<sup>127</sup> Houghton and Lorber 2002, 114.

<sup>128</sup> On the debate concerning the location of the Baktrian mint, see Houghton et al. 2008, 643–4.

Se 1 and 2, and the association of Se 3 with an administrative stamp dated to S.E. 70 (243/2 B.C.) support the identification of the portrait as an early Seleukid ruler.

Next come three matrices, Se 4–6 (pl. 12), identified as Antiochos I by Messina and Mollo. A simple glance at the sealings suffices to set aside Se 6, which presents the front half of a helmeted profile. The authors interpret the impression as a posthumous portrait executed by a successor. This identification is solely based on style since no such type is attested in the coinage of the period. The Corinthian helmet tipped back to expose the profile is not found on any other Seleukid portraits in the archive, although some rulers wear other headgear such as a Boeotian helmet—used by the cavalry—or a *kausia* (pl. 16, Se 44–46, 48).<sup>129</sup> The depiction however compares rather well with the helmeted head shown on numerous sealings found in the archive and identified as Athena by the same authors (pl. 20.1).<sup>130</sup> Seleukid coins featuring a profile of the goddess also represent much better comparanda than a hypothetical, posthumous portrait.<sup>131</sup>

Matrices Se 4–5 (pl. 12) compare more favorably with numismatic portraits of Antiochos I, who was the first Seleukid to use his portrait extensively on his coinage, an example that most his successors followed.<sup>132</sup> During his lifetime, several different portraits were minted at a minimum of seven different mints spanning the territory under his rule from Ionia to Baktria (pl. 17, Antiochos I).<sup>133</sup> The likely earliest issue originated in Baktria and features a rather unflattering portrait of a “wized” man with a prominent, pointy nose, pronounced naso-labial line, and bangs combed forward (*SC* 426). Several die links point to a trend towards rejuvenation in later issues both at the Baktra/Ai Khanoum mint and farther afield.<sup>134</sup> The earliest issues of a new reverse type with Apollo seated on the omphalos, launched in the western part of the empire, present a rejuvenated version (*SC* 324). Nevertheless, these portraits are consistent in the main physiognomic characteristics with bangs combed forward, drooping supraorbital arch, marked naso-labial line, and small, rounded chin.

Surprisingly, Messina and Mollo did not identify any portrait of Antiochos II and justify this absence by comparing it to the custom of the Seleukeia mint to strike effigies of previous rulers during the entire duration of Antiochos II’s reign.<sup>135</sup> This is too hasty a conclusion and I

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<sup>129</sup> Although faint, a thin line represents the nose guard typical of Corinthian helmets.

<sup>130</sup> Bollati and Messina 2004, nos. AtT 1–119.

<sup>131</sup> Gold staters with Athena wearing a Corinthian helmet were first introduced by Alexander the Great during his reform of the Macedonian monetary system ca. 333 B.C. and continued to be minted by the Seleukids down to the reign of Antiochos III. For a list of helmeted-Athena types minted by the Seleukids, see Houghton and Lorber 2002, vol. 2, 207–8.

<sup>132</sup> A precedent may have been set by Seleukos I, as I believe, with the short-lived type minted at Susa soon after Ipsos depicting a male head wearing a spotted, bull-horned helmet, as presented above (Marest-Caffey 2016).

<sup>133</sup> Houghton and Lorber 2002, 115.

<sup>134</sup> Houghton and Lorber 2002, 151.

<sup>135</sup> Messina and Mollo 2004, 36.

propose that matrix Se 9 (pl. 12) can be identified as Antiochos II.<sup>136</sup> Indeed, nothing indicates that the local numismatic program was mirrored in the seals of the same period. By the same reasoning presented by the authors, the posthumous portrait of Seleukos I (Se 1–2) should not have appeared among the sealings since the city’s mint never issued the type. Glyptic and numismatic are different, and sometimes independent, media. Although a die-cutter and a gem engraver may have been given the same prototype to work from, the functions of each end product were different. It is also unclear whether the seals from which the sealings were impressed should be located exclusively at Seleukeia. Some sealed documents may have traveled. Furthermore, while Antiochos II chose to honor his ancestors by striking their portraits at several mints, his own portrait *did* appear on obverses during his lifetime, probably after the Second Syrian War, at several important mints such as Sardis and Antiocheia on the Orontes (pl. 17, Antiochos II).<sup>137</sup> These numismatic types offer the best comparanda for the short bangs combed forward, low forehead crossed by a deep wrinkle in the middle, and straight nose of the profile on matrix Se 9.

Despite the difficulties experienced by Seleukos II in maintaining control over the empire at the sudden death of his father, his numismatic portraits are rather consistent across the early issues. Before the revolt of his brother Antiochos Hierax, the Sardis mint produced several emissions of a coinage with a new reverse type showing Apollo leaning against a tripod (pl. 17, *SC* 654.1). Although the relative order of emissions from Sardis still needs to be confirmed, their dies present a physiognomy consistent with the portrait struck on gold staters and silver tetradrachms soon after Seleukos II retook Antiocheia on the Orontes from Ptolemaic troops around 244 B.C. (pl. 17, *SC* 689.1). The comparison with matrix Se 7 (pl. 12) is particularly convincing: the same long, aquiline nose, and downward corner of the mouth. On the contrary, the impression of matrix Se 8 (pl. 12) is too faint and fragmentary to be identified, but it does resemble the previous one. Furthermore, the numismatic portraits of Seleukos II remained rather youthful throughout his reign, while those of Seleukos III are rather generic, which renders the identification of matrix Se 11 difficult.

The authors of *Seleucia al Tigri* identify the crude, bearded portrait of Se 10 (pl. 13) as another image of Seleukos II on account of the facial hair appearing on some of his numismatic portraits, particularly in the eastern part of the empire. However, there is no parallel for such a full beard and his facial hair is usually limited to sideburns, and only rarely presents a wispy beard. On the other hand, the only known portrait of the usurper Achaios features a full beard. The date of an administrative stamp associated with Se 10 could support the identification of the matrix as a portrait of Achaios, although it should be noted that the usurper, a cousin of Seleukos III and Antiochos III, never controlled Seleukeia on the Tigris nor any city outside Anatolia. Antiochos Hierax is also unlikely to have had his image impressed on sealings originating east of Asia Minor. Nevertheless, Messina and Mollo suggested that matrices Se 11 and 12 (pl. 13) could be identified as such. Unfortunately the numismatic output of Antiochos Hierax is too

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<sup>136</sup> Because I felt compelled to follow the dynastic order and my identifications diverge from those proposed by Messina and Mollo, some matrices are not discussed sequentially. The reader should refer to Table 2.

<sup>137</sup> Houghton and Lorber 2002, 169.

varied, often issuing portraits of former dynasts, to pinpoint his portrait among the sealings using our working principles.

The seven portraits identified as Antiochos III (pl. 13, Se 13–19) present a more diversified sample than the previous rulers. The whole series is readily identifiable through the king's distinct overbite and comparison with his later numismatic portrait type (pl. 17, *SC* 1039). Interestingly the sealings' iconography is more diversified. On matrix Se 17, the king is wearing a beaked headdress, probably the head of an eagle or griffin, and a Dionysiac ivy wreath adorns the profile of Se 18 and 19. Literary sources do not mention any connection between the eagle and Seleukid rulers, but the bird appears on the seal of the *chreophylakes* of Uruk dated to the reign of Antiochos III and on Seleukid coins from the same period.<sup>138</sup> As for the wreath, material and epigraphic evidence attests to a Seleukid association with Dionysos. Seleukos I issued a silver coinage at Susa with overt Dionysiac connotations (pl. 12, *SC* 173.1). A century later, a decree from Teos, probably dating to 203 B.C., instituted a cult of Antiochos III and Laodike in the temple of Dionysos with cult-statues and rituals shared with the deity as “common saviors of the city.”<sup>139</sup>

The crown prince Antiochos, and his brothers and the successors, Seleukos IV and Antiochos IV, should be treated as a group. The authors of *Seleucia al Tigri* identify the matrices Se 26–29 (pl. 14) as representing jugate portraits of a son of Antiochos III, the prince Antiochos, and his mother Laodike. The Seleukid Era dates inscribed on associated stamps support this interpretation. Because the prince died in 193 B.C., it is more likely that the last of the jugate portraits (Se 29), which is associated with a later S.E. date, represents the next designated successor, the future Seleukos IV with his mother. However, no numismatic comparanda are available since Antiochos III did not issue any coinage with portraits of his heirs. The numismatic portraits of Seleukos IV (pl. 18, *SC* 1313.1) find convincing comparanda in the matrices Se 32 and 34 (pls. 14–15).

Messina and Mollo identify the radiate portrait seen on matrix Se 30 and 31 (pl. 14) as Seleukos IV as crown prince, although they acknowledge that no radiate portraits of the ruler are known. I believe that the iconography points to a different candidate, i.e., Seleukos' younger brother Mithridates/Antiochos (renamed after the death of the original crown prince). The profile seen on the sealings is rather conspicuous for its *anastolē* (an unusual element in Seleukid portraiture) and radiate headdress. Seleukos IV never used these attributes in his coinage, but his brother did. Antiochos IV was about forty years old when he inherited the throne. The portrait seen on early dies (pl. 18, *SC* 1395.1) most likely “improved” upon the actual features of the ruler, giving him a divine aura with the use of the *anastolē* and of a radiate crown on other issues. Although Se 30 and 31 do not mirror the physiognomy of *SC* 1395.1, the divine pretensions of the portrait fit better with the portraits of Antiochos IV than those of Seleukos IV.<sup>140</sup> The matrix Se 40 present a more mature image of Antiochos IV that finds excellent

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<sup>138</sup> Rostovtzeff 1932, 35–6, no. 35; Messina and Mollo 2004, 37. The Ptolemies are also represented with eagle *exuviae* (Milne 1916).

<sup>139</sup> *SEG* 41.1003 I.

<sup>140</sup> Another possible identification could be Antiochos VI, whose coinage regularly features the radiate crown. Since Antiochos VI was a young child during his reign, it comes as no surprise

comparanda among his coinage (pl. 18, *SC* 1472) and sealings from other archives, as discussed below.

Demetrios I and his sister-wife Laodike V are depicted on matrix Se 43 (pl. 15). The same jugate portraits were first struck on coins minted at Seleukeia on the Tigris soon after the king defeated the usurper Timarchos (pl. 18, *SC* 1686). It is possible that the royal wedding took place in the same city and that the coinage was commemorative.<sup>141</sup> His distinctive profile with a bristly tuft of hair swept to the left, prominent aquiline nose, and weak chin is also found on early tetradrachms minted at his principal mint, Antiocheia on the Orontes (pl. 18, *SC* 1634). A sealing found in the Uruk archive with a similar and distinctive treatment of the hair, although the features appear more bloated, should also be associated with the ruler (pl. 20.2).

The last identifiable Seleukid ruler in the Seleukeia archive, Demetrios II, appears wearing the traditional diadem or a *kausia*, the Macedonian hat found regularly on sealings but rarely on coins (pl. 16, Se 47–48). Interestingly, the seal used to impress the diademed portrait was not primarily conceived for this purpose. Indeed, on matrix Se 47, the king faces left, the unfavorable side in Greek culture. It is the only Seleukid portrait from the archive to do so. The intaglio was probably conceived as an object of personal adornment whose device was to be read and appreciated in the negative. The slightly convex surface of the sealing and thin groove best seen on Se 47A indicate that the intaglio was engraved on a stone bezel mounted in a ring. The superior quality, best illustrated by the intricate details of the hair and beard and delicate plasticity of the ear, suggests that the work was a product of the court. The mannered style and function of the original intaglio find excellent parallels with glyptic portraits often labeled as “idealized.”

The case study of Seleukid portraits found on sealings from Seleukeia demonstrates several points. First, it is possible to use numismatic portraits to identify Hellenistic rulers depicted on gems and sealings. However, comparanda must be selected carefully using guidelines based on a better understanding of numismatic practices. When no such comparanda can be secured—which is not uncommon since more work is needed in many areas of Hellenistic numismatics—we should refrain from “forcing” a name onto a likeness. Second, we have seen that the identifications based on the guidelines presented above are not only more secure but also diverse. One of the crippling problems of cherry-picking numismatic portraits—other than the obvious methodical obstacle—is that some dies may look attractive for their aesthetic quality or perceived degree of lifelikeness but are in fact quite far removed from the original prototype. Indeed, they can be altered by the familiarity of the die engraver with other dynastic types, thus resulting in closely resembling depictions for different rulers. Furthermore, some rulers used only parsimoniously their own portrait on coins, and if one looks at a wide sample of their production without a good knowledge of minting practices a new prototype can get “lost.” The coinage of Antiochos II offers an excellent example of the phenomenon. Most of the portraits minted during his reign are of his ancestors, particularly of Antiochos I (pl. 21). His own portrait

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that his numismatic image appears so impersonal. However, his portraits never feature the *anastolē*.

<sup>141</sup> Houghton et al. 2008, 183.

is easily missed if one fails to identify the new first die from the important mint of Sardis (pl. 21, SC 519).

### **Elusive types and deployment across media**

Now that we have proposed and tested a new method of identification, we need to address the crux of the problem. Why is it so difficult to identify Hellenistic ruler portraits in general? And why are engraved portraits particularly challenging? First, we need to acknowledge the relatively limited nature of the archaeological record.<sup>142</sup> Second, and most importantly, we face a type of ruler portraiture that is different from its successor, i.e., Roman portraiture, the study of which has deeply influenced the field. In fact, many discussions of Hellenistic portrait identification invoke the case of Imperial portraiture as a methodological standard.<sup>143</sup> Roman emperors can usually be identified at a glance across media because the imperial image was carefully constructed and disseminated through an *official* portrait type, which was replicated—with various degrees of success—for a certain period until a new type replaced it.<sup>144</sup> German scholars such as Dietrich Boschung, Klaus Fittschen, and Paul Zanker have perfected a technique of attribution based on these principles of creation and diffusion, and convincingly established a corpus of official types for most emperors.<sup>145</sup> In the Roman model, the strong hierarchical relation between official portrait types and subsequent replicas validates a method of identification based on empirical comparison since it does not rely solely on physiognomy but rather on the permanence of some elements such as patterns in the hairstyle resulting from the copying process itself.<sup>146</sup>

The paradigm cannot be applied indiscriminately to the Hellenistic period.<sup>147</sup> A few ruler portraits seem to have been made on the basis of a common model, but many more do not. There is no doubt that some prototypes were officially approved and circulated, as illustrated in the sequence of gradually aging portraits of Antiochos III, paralleled at different mints. However, the current state of the evidence—admittedly patchy—does not support the idea that a system of official types was used on the scale of Imperial portraiture. This is best illustrated by the heterogeneous nature of dies in some issues, as well as cross-media comparisons. A marble head in Berlin of unknown provenance has unanimously been recognized as a portrait of Antiochos IV on the basis of comparison with numismatic portraits (pl. 22).<sup>148</sup> The physiognomies feature a similar high forehead, receding hairline, knotted brow, sagging upper eyelid, slight depression of the bridge of the nose, and flat cheek. However, the marble head appears noticeably younger. Signs of age prominent on the coin such as the wrinkled forehead and sagging jawline have been

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<sup>142</sup> Smith 1988, 2–3.

<sup>143</sup> Smith 1988, 3, 27; Fleischer 1991, 3–4.

<sup>144</sup> The concept of official types was first articulated in Zanker 1979.

<sup>145</sup> Fittschen and Zanker 1983; Zanker 1983; Boschung 1989; 1993. For a history of the concept of “type” in Roman portraiture, see Fittschen 2015.

<sup>146</sup> On *Kopienkritik*, see Hallett 1995.

<sup>147</sup> Smith 1988, 28–9.

<sup>148</sup> Fleischer 1991, 52–3 (with further bibliographic references).

smoothed away. The marble lips are plumper and the cheeks tauter. Furthermore, the hairstyle, although similar, does not mirror the pattern of curls at the back of the head as seen on the coin. As stated earlier, the Hellenistic concept of royal portraiture allowed some flexibility.

We must conclude that different categories of royal images existed.<sup>149</sup> In the Hellenistic world, different “events” resulted in the creation of independent, context-conscious prototypes that were diffused vertically (from prototypes to medium-specific versions) but rarely horizontally (across media), thus creating complex and highly differentiated networks of royal images. There does not seem to have been a desire to regularize a single image that could be translated *across media and functions*.

R.R.R. Smith uses the fundamental difference between Hellenistic and Imperial portraiture to move past the weak correlation between numismatic portraits and their sculptural counterparts, and focuses on the differences of contexts and functions. His take on three media—coins, gems, and sealings—is of particular interest for this chapter since he broadly equates media with contexts and functions.<sup>150</sup> According to Smith, the most widely diffused vehicle for the image of the king, coinage, was “designed primarily to impress the Greco-Macedonian soldiery.” Conversely, as products of the court, “gem portraits on the whole seem more idealized, to contain more divine pretension than the often sharply individualized coin types.” Finally, “sealings are usually cruder and simplified compared to the coin dies.” Such statements are inevitably somewhat sweeping, as Smith acknowledges himself. But it is also based on skewed evidence in the case of gems. How could we otherwise explain the divide perceived by Smith between gems and sealings? As a clay impression in the positive, a sealing undeniably is a medium distinct from glyptic. Yet an engraved gemstone or metal ring was pressed onto the soft material to create it. The relationship is unequal: a sealing cannot come to be without its seal, but the reverse is not true. Thus, the corpus of sealings should relate more closely to gems than Smith acknowledges.

In fact, the explanation for the perceived differences lies less in the disparity *between* media than *within* them. This is particularly true in the case of gems, but also to some extent of numismatic portraits. Although there is little doubt that the latter were primarily designed for military consumption, we should not assume that all depictions on coins were equal and solely targeted a Greek audience. I have demonstrated elsewhere that the “victory coinage” of Seleukos I mined the polysemy of power imagery to appeal to the Persian elite.<sup>151</sup> This strategy is not only detectable in some iconographical choices but also evidenced in the geographical distribution of such types and other signs of local consumption such as graffiti in Aramaic and imitative coins produced locally. Furthermore, some Hellenistic coin types appear rather commemorative and may not have been distributed widely and equally among all the soldiery. In the case of ruler portraits engraved on gems, the situation appears even more complex with *some* portraits clearly

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<sup>149</sup> Robert Fleischer (1991, 135–6) concludes that the marble portrait came from a religious context. R.R.R. Smith (1988, 29–30) identifies three categories of portraits: coin types, types, and non-types. He proposes three reasons to explain the differences between the Hellenistic and Roman systems: technical, political, and ideological.

<sup>150</sup> Smith 1988, 12–4.

<sup>151</sup> Marest-Caffey 2016, 14–22.



influenced by numismatic types and others not. The reason for the diversity lies in the variety of functions of engraved portraits: some were destined for the administration, others were gifted to members of the court, and yet others were mass-produced for the potency of their imagery, sometimes perceived as apotropaic.<sup>152</sup>

The problem with the generalizing statements presented above is best illustrated by a group of sealings all showing portraits of Antiochos IV but not impressed using the same seal nor even seals of the same medium (pl. 23.1–3). The first specimen was found in the archive of Seleukeia on the Tigris. The slightly concave surface and soft edge of the impression suggests that the portrait was probably engraved on a gemstone mounted as a bezel on a ring. The second impression, on a bulla excavated at Uruk in the early twentieth century, was made with a metal ring, as indicated by its flat surface and sharp, sunken edge.<sup>153</sup> The third sealing, impressed with a stone intaglio mounted on a ring (as evidenced by the thin line at upper right), was excavated at Kedesh.<sup>154</sup> The profiles represent the same ruler: the same high forehead with receding hairline, wispy strands of hair sticking out at the apex, pressed lips, square jawline, and so on. Yet two major differences emerge. First, the treatment of surfaces and volumes is noticeably different. The convex surface of the seal used at Seleukeia permitted a deeper engraving of the features. The cheek is more plastic and the forehead less schematized. The portrait on the third sealing appears cruder than the other two. These disparities represent the reality of working with different media. Gem carving allows more nuances in surface treatment, although the skill level of individual engravers has a tremendous impact on the finished product. Yet the same aura of particularism permeates the portraits: they appear neither “idealized” nor especially unforgiving.

The second major difference between the three sealings lies in an iconographical variant: the presence/absence of a radiate crown over the diadem. This iconographical flexibility introduces a major pictorial difference between the numismatic and glyptic media. Although in the case presented above both versions find comparanda in the numismatic corpus, in most instances the iconography of portraits engraved on seals tends to be more diversified.<sup>155</sup> Indeed, once Hellenistic rulers altered the numismatic tradition by replacing divinities or heroes on obverses with their own portraits, a new paradigm emerged, i.e., a diademed head in profile looking to right.<sup>156</sup> Changes in the iconography of numismatic portraits such as the addition of a radiate crown or other headgear are somewhat exceptional and must be symptomatic of a desire from the ruler to break with tradition for political or ideological reasons.

Portraits impressed on sealings do not follow the same conservative rules and display more variety in their iconography. Another sealing found at Kedesh shows Antiochos IV, this

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<sup>152</sup> See Chapter 5 for the use of engraved portraits as seals.

<sup>153</sup> Hameeuw and Van Overmeire 2014. For a survey of shapes of metal seal rings in the Hellenistic period, see Gerring 2000.

<sup>154</sup> I would like to thank Sharon Herbert for sending me images of the Kedesh archive before their forthcoming publication by Donald Ariel.

<sup>155</sup> The radiate crown first appeared on a small group of silver fractions and bronze coins from Antiocheia on the Orontes (*SC* 1405–6, 1408–11), and then on a larger group of silver tetradrachms and fractions minted at an undetermined location in Media or Persis (*SC* 1519–23).

<sup>156</sup> Kroll 2007, 113–7.

time sporting a laurel wreath over his diadem (pl. 23.4). Furthermore, several sealings from Kedesh present the unmistakable profile of Antiochos III wearing a *kausia*, which is not found anywhere on the king's coinage (pl. 24.1). In the Paphos archive, Ptolemaios VIII appears alternatively wearing a diadem, a radiate crown, a *kausia*, and a star above his forehead. These variations show that *context* is key to understand the deployment of royal portraits. The *kausia* may have been appropriate for the seal of one particular person or office, or at one particular time, but not for another, and certainly not for most numismatic portraits.

Finally, the common assertion that engraved gems seem on the whole to be more “idealized” and display more divine pretension than coinage needs to be addressed.<sup>157</sup> I believe that this impression, which appears reasonable if one browses plates of royal glyptic portraits, results from the nature of the extant evidence. Centuries of selective collecting practices have preserved a rarefied group of intaglios and cameos of superlative quality and idiosyncratic properties. Several arguments support this conclusion. First, by common consent, the artistic quality of extant engraved gems tends to be higher than that of the corpus of sealings. Second, fewer extant portraits were conceived to serve primarily as seal devices as opposed to items of personal adornment, when compared to the sample preserved on sealings. For instance, among the gems engraved with portraits listed by Dimitris Plantzos, about 8% are facing left when impressed. Conversely, this is the case in only between 0.8 and 2.8% of the portraits found at Kedesh, Paphos, and Seleukeia on the Tigris (table 3). Thus, a significant portion of extant glyptic portraits were probably *not* conceived as official seals for the administration but rather destined for court consumption, and possibly gifted as presentation pieces in special circumstances.

Studying sealing archives confirms that generalizing statements attributing fundamental differences to distinct media used for royal portraiture are premature in the current state of the preserved material evidence. If perceived discrepancies could be understood solely on the basis of materiality, the corpora of engraved gems and sealings should be more closely related than they are. In fact, a great deal of variety appears in the material evidence. While the portraits found at Paphos appear rather crude and simplified as a whole, most specimens from the Seleukeia and Kedesh archives are of good or excellent quality, even impressed on a material such as clay that does not always capture all the intricate details of engravings. As for the alleged differences between numismatic and glyptic portraits, we have seen that two-thirds of the royal portraits from Seleukeia can be identified with some degree of certainty on the basis of comparison with coins if a rigorously worked out method is used.<sup>158</sup> When the spectrum of engraved portraits is reconstructed from sealing archives, it appears that a large proportion of matrices do in fact echo numismatic types. Thus, diversity in the portraits' iconography and style should rather be attributed to different contexts and functions.

Many engraved portraits described as “idealized” were court products with a different function. A garnet intaglio in Athens provides an excellent illustration (pl. 24.2). The young

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<sup>157</sup> Smith 1988, 12; Plantzos 1999, 43.

<sup>158</sup> Another study (Gross 2008) concluded that about two thirds of glyptic portraits are related to numismatic types, although the methodology used was not explained.

man's profile is identified by most scholars as Antiochos III.<sup>159</sup> The attribution is convincing: a dynastic air and thin diadem fits comfortably with the corpus of early Seleukid portraits, and the long and pointy nose is distinctive of numismatic portraits of Antiochos III.<sup>160</sup> Yet the aura of youth and timelessness emanating from the engraved portrait finds no parallel in the coinage of the ruler. Instead, the style, with its artificial construction of facial elements such as the smooth cheek, pouting lips “improving” upon the king's distinctive overbite, delicate curve of the eyebrow, and mannered hairstyle, recalls that seen on matrix Se 47 showing the left-facing profile of Demetrios II (pl. 16). Conversely, numismatic portraits of Antiochos III (pl. 17, SC 1039) present a level of unflattering particularism not seen in the engraved gem, especially in the almost caricatured nose. The features on the gem are softer, harsh lines are smoothed, and the bone structure of the cheek, jaw, and probably eyebrow attenuated. Yet the gem engraver conveyed a sense of volume—in the lush curls and fleshy corner of the mouth—and presence—through details such as the anatomical rendering of the ear or singular hooked curl at the temple—not seen in the more linear style of the dies. The quality of the engraving, size of the stone, and prominent signature of the artist, Apollonios, suggest a court work.<sup>161</sup> Comparison between numismatic dies and the garnet intaglio show that they are distinct works with different aesthetics and functions, focusing on diverse aspects of the same physiognomy.

The apparent lack of fixed, official portrait types and flexibility of the royal image depending on function shed some light on the astonishing variation in the physiognomies of numismatic and glyptic portraits, a problem that has long bedeviled the study of Hellenistic royal portraiture. The heightened realism observed in Hellenistic faces, when compared with previous periods, should not be equated with a quest for verisimilitude. Alexander the Great's preference for the “psychological realism/phenomenal idealism” of Lysippos (i.e., his ability to translate physical quirks into visual manifestations of the king's essence), illustrates how the tensions inherent to all royal portraiture crystallized and were resolved in the foundational years of Hellenistic monarchy.<sup>162</sup> Furthermore, the flexibility of such a representational system allowed a serial medium whose value lies in consistency, such as coinage, to uphold two essential mandates: practicality and adequacy. Thus, coins could be struck at a brisk pace and still be accepted by consumers. Physiognomic correspondences between dies and seals that were engraved at different moments of a ruler's reign indicate that some prototypes were made from life during a particular “event.” However, subsequent engravers were granted some freedom as long as their work conveyed the essence of the ruler. The appropriateness of the representation *to its intended context* was valued above all else.

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<sup>159</sup> Fleischer 1991, 37 (with additional references).

<sup>160</sup> The diadems of later Seleukid and Ptolemaic rulers tend to be much wider.

<sup>161</sup> Unfortunately we do not know anything concerning the provenance of the piece. But the scenario of a luxury item produced for Antiochos III and gifted by the ruler to a member of his court is attractive.

<sup>162</sup> The very possibility of a true royal likeness has been a point of discomfort in the Western artistic tradition. Building on Ernst Kantorowicz's theory of the dual nature of the king's body, incarnating both absolute power and human frailty, Louis Marin has argued that the tension constitutes a fundamental dynamic of ruler portraiture (Kantorowicz 1957; Marin 1981).

This conclusion has a bearing on the methodological problem presented above. Picking and choosing dies as representative of a monarch is not wrong in itself. Most dies would have been approved by some mint official and were thus deemed *adequate* representations of the king *in the numismatic context*. The methodological error stems from the exclusive focus on likeness *for the purpose of identification*. The Hellenistic ruler portrait cannot be defined only through an accumulation of specific physical features divorced from other context-specific markers. The diadem (and exceptionally the *kausia*), the right-facing profile, the inscription claiming the title of *basileus* and displaying a dynastic name along with other epithets are all *constitutive parts* of the numismatic royal portrait. It should come as no surprise that Ptolemaios I first struck his image ca. 305/4 when he claimed the title of king for himself. Unfortunately glyptic portraits have often lost many of these constitutive, but unfortunately ephemeral, elements, although they may retain the telltale diadem. There, we see that context and function are essential. A coin is an impersonal object to be passed from hands to hands, whose type (*typos*) guarantees its value. For this reason, a numismatic portrait needs to follow a careful format and be labeled. Conversely, a gem is an intimate object that is closely linked to the identity and life of the wearer. A glyptic portrait does not need to be inscribed: it is commissioned, gifted, and/or bequeathed by one individual to another, neither of whom needs such a label. In the case of sealings with royal portraits, the context rooted in historical circumstances is often lost, but not completely irretrievable, as demonstrated in Chapter 5. The efficacy of such portraits was intertwined with the identity and agency of the wearer, whether an administrator, private individual, military officer, courtier, prince, or the king himself.

## CHAPTER 3

### Pictoriality

#### From *Prosōpon* to *Eikōn*

Gisela Richter opens her introduction of *The Portraits of the Greeks* with the following revealing lines. “The study of Greek portraits is singularly rewarding. To be brought face to face with the famous personalities of ancient Greece is in itself an inspiring experience.”<sup>163</sup> It is indeed tempting and immediately gratifying to look straight through the *pictorial object* (the picture) to get at the *individual* (the image), however removed the historical person may be. The phenomenon may explain why physical referentiality, as opposed to other aspects of portraiture, has been the focus of much scholarly concern. Unfortunately, the easy slippage between the portrait and its referent has obscured the pictoriality of the genre. By pictoriality, I do not mean the recursive process in which marks (for instance brushstrokes) or matter (such as the mass of droplets forming a cloud) are “seen *as* something-or-other” and “that something-or-other can be seen *in* the mark,” as defined by Whitney Davis.<sup>164</sup> Rather, the term here designates the state of being a picture (*eikōn*) and more specifically the formal parameters of this “picture-ness.”<sup>165</sup> I will further define this pictorial framework. But first, I want to stress the particular hermeneutic significance of the topic. Indeed, if we trace the origins of Western portraiture to the Hellenistic period, we must consider the pictorial characteristics of the genre at its inception and question the purpose of recurrent formal choices in the picture-making process thereafter.

The following questions stand at the heart of the present chapter. What pictorial choices were involved in the creation of engraved portraits in the Hellenistic period? More broadly, what do these formal characteristics—which seem specific to the medium—tell us about the Greek idea of portraiture in general? If indeed pictures are “solutions to problems in situations,” as proposed by Michael Baxandall, exposing glyptic solutions to portraiture can shed light on zones of tension in the genre as a whole.<sup>166</sup> Unfortunately, one of the collateral damages of the modern tyranny of the image over the picture in studies of engraved portraits is that pictorial choices have usually been dismissed as mere solutions to *technical* problems. And even when some recurring characteristics have been noticed, they are usually approached as “qualities”, i.e., formal properties *inherent* within a medium. For instance, Dimitris Plantzos writes, “Circular stones also became fashionable [in the Hellenistic period], mainly used for heads and portrait studies, as they were more suitable for those.”<sup>167</sup> We may wonder whether bezels were cut in oval and round shapes because this format was more suitable to host portraits. If so, we assume that portraits are inherently spatially compact. But it is clearly not the case, if sculpture in the round is taken as evidence. Indeed, the preferred format for portraits carved in marble and cast in

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<sup>163</sup> Richter 1965a, 1.

<sup>164</sup> Davis 2011, 150–1.

<sup>165</sup> I chose not to use the term “iconicity” because of its association with Charles Sanders Peirce’s theory of signs. It would connote physical likeness.

<sup>166</sup> Baxandall 1985, 35.

<sup>167</sup> Plantzos 1999, 35.

bronze was full length until the late Hellenistic period (pl. 25). So then, were glyptic portraits shaped to meet the material and technical demands of the medium? This brief exercise illustrates the circularity of arguments based on the assumption that such characteristics are “qualities” of a medium. Rather, I argue that they represent “values,” i.e., characteristics *assigned* by picture-makers and patrons. I propose that shifting the pictorial study of engraved portraits from “qualities” to “values” unveils how the portrait was conceptualized in Greek thought.

This chapter focuses on three formal values shared by the overwhelming majority of gems engraved with portraits. These conventions of the genre have too often been taken for granted since portraiture re-emerged in its classical iteration in the late Medieval and Renaissance periods.<sup>168</sup> The first of these characteristics, miniature scale, has generally been treated as a quality of gems with little bearing—other than technical—on the picture-making process. Indeed, nature and intended function seem to dictate the scale of glyptic portraits. However, this quality of the medium does not negate the *cultural value* of the miniature for the ancients. The next two conventions are more obvious since they are clearly selected in the picture-making process. Firstly, glyptic portraits are closely cropped around the head. Secondly, the perspective chosen is almost exclusively profile and rightward facing.

These principles, despite being idiosyncrasies of miniature portraits, should not be considered as irrelevant to the study of portraiture in general. Rather, the constrained format of engraved gems with its specific rules highlights a zone of tension that is too easily overlooked in the objects of mainstream interest, that is a concern for the status of the face (*prosōpon*) as it relates to an individual and its representation (*eikōn*) in Greek material culture. A pillar of the current understanding of ancient portraiture is that Greek portraits, unlike those of later periods, did not focus on the head alone but rather included the whole body.<sup>169</sup> Sheila Dillon writes, “... it certainly does seem to have been the case that Greek portraits always consisted of both head and statue body at least into the Hellenistic period. Indeed, in the few instances in which both the head and the body of a Greek portrait are preserved, the representation is much more coherent and expressive than when one has only the head.”<sup>170</sup> It is indisputable that sculpture in the round supports the received wisdom about the holistic quality of Greek portraiture.<sup>171</sup> It would, however, be a fallacy both methodologically and logically to conclude that a head alone would necessarily have been considered as inadequate. In fact, copious material evidence, particularly numismatic, glyptic, and toreutic, attests to a Greek interest in abbreviated portrait formats. Upon close scrutiny, it appears that miniaturists proposed original solutions to the problem of portraiture in specific circumstances. The association of the miniature with marvels and microcosms in Greek thought provided an excellent support for such explorations. In the end, it appears that the pictorial choices manifest in glyptic stress the status of the portrait as a representation (*eikōn*) as opposed to a real, living face (*prosōpon*).

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<sup>168</sup> For early modern examples of profile portraits, see Burnett and Schofield 1998; McCrory 1998; Randolph 2002, 76–107; Perkinson 2009, 278–304.

<sup>169</sup> Smith 1988, 32; Kleiner 1992, 31; Dillon 2006, 30–6; Smith 2006, 7; Jaeggi 2008, 13.

<sup>170</sup> Dillon 2006, 76.

<sup>171</sup> A holistic approach also offers refreshing hermeneutic possibilities (Smith 2006, 7).

## Miniature

Before we can address the two main conventions of the preferred format for engraved portraits, we need to discuss the main parameter of glyptic pictoriality, i.e., its scale. Many would object that miniature scale is an inherent property of the medium. Precious and semi-precious stones are found in nature in the form of (usually) small mineral crystals. Thus, the use of gemstones as pictorial supports requires the artists to adapt their craft to the physical properties of the material. While there is no doubt that the natural size of the support has technical consequences, it would be wrong to assume that it always dictates the scale of the work. Ancient sources offer numerous examples of technical feats defying the natural proportion of materials. For instance, ivory covered the flesh surfaces of Pheidias's over forty-foot tall *Athena Parthenos*, although an elephant tusk rarely reaches a quarter of this size.<sup>172</sup> Pliny the Elder mentions a life-size statue made of topaz carved in honor of the Ptolemaic queen Arsinoe.<sup>173</sup> He also lists among the treasures paraded in Rome during Pompey's triumph a portrait rendered in pearls.<sup>174</sup>

More importantly, considering small scale solely as a property of gems as a medium ignores the ancient cultural value of miniature. Indeed, a variety of media and scales were available to patrons and artists for the purpose of portrait making. Selecting a gemstone as a support is—in part—a pictorial choice. Indeed, scale is a core element of the picture-making process but it is also a deeply anthropocentric concept: the yardstick always is the human body.<sup>175</sup> The obvious impacts of scale are phenomenological and functional in nature, and will be addressed in the following chapters: one interacts differently with the miniature and the gigantic. Although there is abundant evidence that scale was culturally significant in ancient art, very little work has been done on the Greek side.<sup>176</sup> The miniature is something we have become desensitized to in modern times, especially since the invention of the microscope and other human scale-defying lenses. But the art of the skilled miniaturist must have been a real marvel to behold before such discoveries.<sup>177</sup>

Ancient literary sources attest to an intimate association of gems with the marvelous. Pliny opens the last book of his encyclopedia with the following paragraph, which is worth quoting in full because it highlights the both miraculous character of precious stones and their universal allure:

So that nothing may be wanting from the project that was undertaken, only gems remain to be discussed. Indeed, in the opinion of many, nowhere else is the splendor of Nature, contracted within the smallest objects, put on display in a

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<sup>172</sup> Greek and Latin sources suggest that tusks could be “unscrolled” to form large sheets of ivory (Lapatin 2001, 75).

<sup>173</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.107–8.

<sup>174</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.14–5.

<sup>175</sup> Stewart 1984, 55–6.

<sup>176</sup> For the significance of scale in Roman contexts, see Kreikenbom 1992; Borromeo 1993; Dahmen 2001; Gagetti 2006; Ruck 2007; Arbeid and Iozzo 2015; Conticelli et al. 2016.

<sup>177</sup> Concerning the debate regarding the existence of magnifying lenses in antiquity, see Plantzos 1997.

more marvelous way. They are held in such esteem on account of their diverse natures, colors, components, and charms, that some people consider it a sacrilege to mar them [by engraving], even for signets, which is the *raison d'être* of gems. Others are truly deemed beyond any price and cannot be appraised at any value or human labor; so much so that for most a single gem is enough to behold the supreme and absolute perfection of Nature's work.<sup>178</sup>

Pliny praises the ability of precious stones, even in their raw state, to distill the essence and beauty of Nature, a value judgment that seems to have been shared by many of his contemporaries. It is no coincidence that the author selected gems as the topic of his ultimate book. Indeed, Pliny opens his encyclopedia with the gigantic topic of astronomy. With gems, the author reaches the other end of the spectrum, i.e., the infinitesimal. The reader comes full circle from cosmos to microcosm.

Other literary evidence shows that the ancients associated engraved gems with microcosms. There is probably no better illustration of the phenomenon than a famous ekphrastic passage in Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*.<sup>179</sup> On a stone of the size of "a maiden's eye" unfolds a complex bucolic scene replete with shapes, colors, and sounds.

Of this quality is every amethyst of India and Ethiopia. But the stone which Kalasiris gave Nausikles did surpass even these. For there was a picture graven on it representing certain beasts, which was done in this fashion. A boy, sitting upon a not very high hill to look about him, kept sheep, appointing for his flock their several pastures with his shepherd's pipe, so that they seemed to be ruled and to stop at their feeding accordingly as he sounded his instrument. A man would have said they had golden fleeces, not by reason of the workmanship, but for that the amethyst shining with his redness upon their backs made them show so fair. There were engraven also young lambs leaping up and down, and some by heaps went up the rock, other some danced round about the shepherd, insomuch that the top of the hill was made a shepherd's disport. Others skipped in the flame of the amethyst, as if they had been in the sun, and with the tips of their feet scraped the stone. Many of the young sort, being of greater courage, seemed as though they wished to go out of the circle, but were prevented by the workmanship which set a band of gold in the manner of a wall about the rock and them. And it was a rock in truth, not a counterfeit; for when the workman had wrought the gold about the outer part of the stone, he let it show here in its native truth what he desired, thinking it of no purpose to counterfeit one stone in another.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.1. Translation adapted from Loeb.

Ut nihil instituto operi desit, gemmae supersunt et in artum coacta rerum naturae maiestas, multis nulla parte mirabilior. Tantum tribuunt varietati, coloribus, materiae, decori, violare etiam signis, quae causa gemmarum est, quasdam nefas ducentes, aliquas vero extra pretia ulla taxationemque humanarum opum arbitantes, ut plerisque ad summam absolutamque naturae rerum contemplationem satis sit una aliqua gemma.

<sup>179</sup> Henig 1994, x–xi; Platt 2006, 237.

<sup>180</sup> Heliodoros, *Aithiopika* 5.13–14.



The newly rediscovered *Lithika* by Poseidippos of Pella offers the most compelling testimony concerning the perception of engraved gems in the Hellenistic period. The epigrams eloquently convey the particular aura associated with these miniature works, two of which are explicitly described as “wonders” (*thaumata*).<sup>181</sup> Interestingly, the poet only uses this term to describe gems, although the subjects of his other epigrams (omens and statues, for instance) seem no less worthy of the qualifier in the modern mind. Indeed, the noun *thauma* is used in very specific contexts in Greek literature. It does not designate any remarkable object or sight, like wonder is sometimes used in modern parlance. Rather it was reserved for truly exceptional phenomena with quasi-divine qualities. For instance, the Seven Wonders extolled by Herodotos and other ancient Greek writers are *not* “wonders” but rather “sights” (*theamata*).<sup>182</sup> In Homer, wonder is “lodged squarely between the loci of gods and humans.”<sup>183</sup> Moreover, in Aristotle, it engenders pregnant moments of philosophical puzzlement and curiosity.<sup>184</sup> In his *Metaphysica*, the Greek philosopher compares wonderment with the work of the geometrician:

For it [the acquisition of knowledge] begins, as we have said, by wondering that all things should be as they are, just as we wonder about marionettes, or about solstices, or the incommensurability of the diagonal of a square; because it seems wonderful to everyone who has not yet perceived the cause that a thing should not be measurable by the smallest unit. But we must end with the contrary and better view, as men do even in these cases when they understand them; for a geometrician would wonder at nothing so much as if the diagonal were to become measurable.<sup>185</sup>

The miniature—like the automaton whose inner workings could be comprehended and the diagonal that could be parsed in mathematical terms—takes on the qualities of the wonder: it challenges our vision and comprehension of space.

In the two epigrams that describe gems as “wonders,” Poseidippos echoes a sense of astonishment inspired by the visual properties and miniature scale of gems. He first associates optical trickery with the term “wonder”:

This stone is [deceptive]: when it is anointed,  
[a light] spreads over the whole surface, [a beguiling] wonder.

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<sup>181</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 13, line 2; 15, line 7. Translation adapted from Austin and Bastianini 2002.

<sup>182</sup> Priestley 2014, 87–8. The linguistic slippage between *thaumata* and *theamata* is not attested before the fourth century A.D.

<sup>183</sup> Prier 1989, 96.

<sup>184</sup> Nightingale 2001; 2004, 253–68.

<sup>185</sup> Arist. *Metaph.* 1.983a. Translation from Loeb.

ἄρχονται μὲν γάρ, ὥσπερ εἶπομεν, ἀπὸ τοῦ θαυμάζειν πάντες εἰ οὕτως ἔχει, καθάπερ περὶ τῶν θαυμάτων ταυτόματα τοῖς μήπω τεθεωρηκόσι τὴν αἰτίαν ἢ περὶ τὰς τοῦ ἡλίου τροπὰς ἢ τὴν τῆς διαμέτρου ἀσυμμετρίαν (θαυμαστὸν γὰρ εἶναι δοκεῖ πᾶσι τοῖς μήπω τεθεωρηκόσι τὴν αἰτίαν εἴ τι τῶ ἐλάχιστῳ μὴ μετρεῖται): δεῖ δὲ εἰς τοῦναντίον καὶ τὸ ἄμεινον κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν ἀποτελευτῆσαι, καθάπερ καὶ ἐν τούτοις ὅταν μάθωσιν: οὐθὲν γὰρ ἂν οὕτως θαυμάσειεν ἀνήρ γεωμετρικὸς ὡς εἰ γένοιτο ἢ διάμετρος μετρητή.

But when [the surface] is dry, all at once an [engraved] Persian [lion]  
flashes as it reaches for the beautiful sun.<sup>186</sup>

The second epigram marvels at the scale of the work and impossibly sharp eye of the engraver, Lynkeios:

It was not a river resounding on its banks, but the head  
of a bearded snake that once held this gem,  
thickly streaked with white. And the chariot on it  
was engraved by the sharp eye of Lynkeios,  
like the mark on a nail; the chariot is seen incised  
but on the surface you could not notice any protrusions.

And that's why the work causes such a great wonder: how did the pupils  
of the engraver's eyes not suffer as he gazed so intently.<sup>187</sup>

In both cases, visibility, and more exactly *changing visibility*, seems to define the wonder. In the first epigram, the engraved lion is noticeable only under certain conditions. The poet most likely describes an intaglio carved into a stone covered with some kind of deposit. Once wet, such stones regain their transparency, making the device difficult to see. When they are dry, however, the engraving stands out from the opaque or slightly translucent surface.<sup>188</sup> In the second epigram, the carving is so fine that the marks themselves (“protrusions”) cannot be seen and yet the miniature chariot is discernible under scrutiny. The status of wonder is not conceived as a property inherent in the object itself but rather as something constructed through the viewer's experience. The concept appears highly anthropocentric. Since the human body (here the eyes) is the yardstick through which objects are appraised, gems are deemed supernatural.

Other ancient texts indicate that miniature was also valued in media that are not traditionally associated with small scale. Indeed, sculptors also flaunted their skills as miniaturists. Pliny describes a self-portrait fashioned in bronze by the celebrated Archaic sculptor Theodoros, which “besides its remarkable fame as a likeness, [was] celebrated for its

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<sup>186</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 13. Translation adapted from Austin and Bastianini 2002.

κ[ερδα]λῆ λίθος ἦδε· λιπα[ινομένη]ς γε μὲν αὐτῆς,  
[φέγγο]ς ὄλους ὄγκους θαυ[μ... ..]ς περιθεῖ·  
ο[... ..] δ' ἰσκελέων ὠκὺ γ[... ..]ς ὁ Πέρσης  
[... ..]ς ἰγών· τράπτει πρὸς καλὸν ἠέλιον.

<sup>187</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 15. Translation adapted from Austin and Bastianini 2002.

οὐ ποταμὸς κελάδων ἐπὶ χεῖλεσιν, ἀλλὰ δράκοντος  
εἶχε ποτ' εὐπύγων τόνδε λίθον κεφαλῇ  
πυκνὰ φαληριόωντα· τὸ δὲ γλυφὲν ἄρμα κατ' αὐτοῦ  
τοῦθ' ὑπὸ Λυγκείου <βλέ>μματος ἐγλύφετο  
ψεύδει χειρὸς ὅμοιον· ἀποπλασθὲν γὰρ ὀράται  
ἄρμα, κατὰ πλάτεος δ' οὐκ ἂν ἴδοις προβόλους·  
ἦ καὶ θαῦμα πέλει μόχθου μέγα, πῶς ὁ λιθουργὸς  
τὰς ἀτενίζούσας οὐκ ἐμόγησε κόρας.

<sup>188</sup> The phenomenon is particularly common with gemstones that have sustained intense, direct heat (such as in a pyre). A whitish, opaque, or translucent layer forms over the outer surface.

minute workmanship.” Three fingers of the left hand held a “marvel of miniaturization” in the form of a quadriga with its driver so small that the wings of a fly could cover it!<sup>189</sup> In his epigrams on statues, the *Andriantopoiika*, Poseidippos also praises the sculptor’s work:

[... .... .] of the chariot, observe at close quarters  
 how hard Theodoros’ hand has worked.  
 For you will see the yoke-band, the reins, the ring on the bit of the horses,  
 the axle, as well as the [driver’s] eye and the tip of his fingers.  
 And you will see full well [the pole, as thin as a hair], and sitting on it  
 you might see a fly [of the size of the chariot.]<sup>190</sup>

Again, the question of visibility looms high. The poet takes pain to mention a variety of small details that can be seen, like the eye or the tip of the driver’s fingers. Other items defy human vision such as the pole and the fly.

Scale, both the very small and the gigantic, was clearly in Poseidippos’ mind when he composed his collections of epigrams. The literary genre lent itself well to ponderings concerning size. Indeed, epigrams originally were short poems to be inscribed on the constrained space of votive offerings and funerary monuments, and later evolved into a popular literary genre in the Hellenistic period.<sup>191</sup> The *Lithika* ends with three epigrams dedicated to colossal stones. The poet describes an enormous boulder of thirty-six feet that was cast out of the sea by the god Poseidon. After the long list of engravers’ names found in the preceding epigrams, the agency of the god and his weapon of choice, the trident, appears to be superimposed on that of the engravers and their tools:

Nor from Antaeus comes the rounded boulder, but from the trident,  
 this portentous object of the Kaphereian sea.  
 Check, Poseidon, your mighty hand, and the heavy wave  
 do not drive from the sea to the unprotected shore.  
 Since you lifted from the depth a twenty-four cubit rock,  
 you will easily mow down a whole island in the sea.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Plin. *HN* 34.83. Translation by the author.

Praeter similitudinis mirabilem famam magna suptilitate celebratur: dextra limam tenet, laeva tribus digitis quadrigulam tenuit, tralatam Praeneste parvitas ut miraculum.

<sup>190</sup> Poseidippos, *Andriantopoiika* 67. Translation adapted from Austin and Bastianini 2002.

±14] . [ . . ]. ἄντυγος ἐγγύθεν ἄθρει  
 τῆς Θεοδωρεΐης χειρὸς ὄκος κάματος·  
 ὄψει γὰρ ζυγόδεσμα καὶ ἠνία καὶ τροχὸν ἵππων  
 ἄξονά <θ>[ῆνιό]χου τ’ ὄμμα καὶ ἄκρα χερῶν·  
 ὄψει δ’ εὐ[ ±12 ] . . . ερος, ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ τῶιδε  
 ἐξομέν[ην ±15 ] μυῖαν ἴδοις.

<sup>191</sup> Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004, 283–349; Bing and Bruss 2007.

<sup>192</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 19. Translation adapted from Austin and Bastianini 2002.

οὐδ’ Ἀνταΐκου· ὁ γυρὸς ὀλοίτροχος, ἀλλὰ τριαίνης  
 τοῦτο Καφηρεΐης τετρακτοεργὸν ἄλός·  
 ἴσχε, Ποσειδάων, μέγλην χέρα καὶ βαρὺ κῦμα

As noticed by Ann Kuttner, the last two lines of the epigram “elegantly link microcosm and macrocosm, epigrammatic with epic creation.”<sup>193</sup> These verses turn on its head the common knowledge that an island dwarfs a boulder. Yet the poet beseeches the god to stay his hand and spare the vulnerable shore. The implicit understanding that the rock is a macrocosm validates the syllogism.

Now that we have established the cultural value of the miniature in antiquity, let us address its pictorial impact on engraved portraits. With the reduction of scale comes a distorting emphasis on one of the central features of a portrait as a formal composition, i.e., the eyes. Indeed, the eye (single since the face is seen in profile) becomes a stylized element that all but defines the genre. It is as if this reliable and consistent component of glyptic portraits is used to counterbalance the unstable visibility of the miniature. In other words, the engraved eye offers the viewer’s gaze an anchor. It is commonly accepted among scholars that unnaturally enlarged eyes constitute a particular feature of Ptolemaic portraits.<sup>194</sup> But the phenomenon seems to expand to *miniature* portraits of other dynasties. Let us compare the bronze bust of Seleukos I from the Villa of the Papyri to a sealing from Seleukeia on the Tigris representing the same king (pl. 26). The eye appears much larger and also set deeper in the eye socket on the sealing when compared to the bronze bust. Likewise, the supra-orbital bone seems much more pronounced, almost caricatural. In general, miniature portraits, of various subjects and quality, tend to present the same emphasis on the eyes, either by enlarging them or by firmly delineating the eyelids and/or the brow (pl. 27). The same phenomenon is well illustrated in another portrait impressed on a sealing from Seleukeia (pl. 28). The engraver carefully modeled the cheek, chin, mouth, and nose with delicate changes of depth. For instance, the soft undulation of the carved surface offers a credible rendering of the skin wrapping around the cheekbone and sagging ever so slightly below the nasolabial fold. By contrast, the lines of the eyelids and brow appear sharp and abrupt.

The second impact of scale relates to the idea that gems were considered as microcosms in antiquity. Indeed, the pervasive association of abbreviated portrait formats (heads or busts) with glyptic miniatures, otherwise largely unattested in other media until the late Hellenistic period (as discussed below), emerges as a particularly powerful and potentially significant aspect of Greek portraiture.<sup>195</sup> We can wonder to which extent miniature scale may have reified some cultural and ideological concerns. Indeed, Susan Stewart in her work on modern miniatures writes, “the reduction of physical dimensions results in a multiplication of ideological properties.”<sup>196</sup> Thus, glyptic portraiture raises the question of the status of the head as it relates to

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ἐκ πόντου ψιλὴν μὴ φέρ’ ἐπ’ ἡϊόνα·  
τετρακταεικοσίπηχυν ὄτ’ ἐκ βυθοῦ ἦραο λάαν,  
ρεῖα καταμήσειε εἰν ἀλὶ νῆσον ὄλην.

<sup>193</sup> Kuttner 2005, 146.

<sup>194</sup> Some scholars (Tunny 2001; Ashrafian 2005) have even interpreted the enlarged eyes and fleshy necks of the Ptolemies as symptoms of a congenital thyroidic disease.

<sup>195</sup> One significant exception are the late fourth- and third-century B.C. case-mirrors that often feature a female head on the cover. Among the better-known examples is a superb bronze specimen in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Mertens 1985, 43, no. 28).

<sup>196</sup> Stewart 1984, 47–8.

the whole body and person in Greek thought. As noted by Stewart, we have empirical, unmediated knowledge *only of parts* of our own body.<sup>197</sup> We can gaze at our own limbs and torso. Our head and bust, however, are out of any direct optic reach. We can only contemplate their image in a mirror and other reflective surfaces or examine their representation in various artistic media.

### Cropping the head

One of the most striking pictorial features of glyptic portraiture is the close cropping of the representation. Indeed, the preferred format depicts a head or bust in a close-fitting oval. The popularity of the scheme cannot be overstated. Among the hundreds of portraits engraved on gems and impressed on sealings, a single example presents the traditional format of Greek portraits in the round, i.e., a full-length figure. The famous carnelian intaglio in the Hermitage Museum, known as the Neisos gem for its inscription “of Neisos,” depicts a nude youth standing frontally in the elegant Lysippic *contrapposto* flanked by a shield at left and an eagle at right (pl. 29). The lush curls and distinctive *anastolē*, or cowlick, of the diademed head in profile clearly identifies the figure as Alexander the Great. He is here represented as Keraunophoros (Thunderbolt-bearer) with a three-pronged thunderbolt brandished in his right hand and a scaled *aegis* draped over his left forearm above a scepter clutched in his hand. However, the choice of this unusual format has an obvious explanation. The portrait was originally created for a different medium and on a different scale as clearly indicated by the awkward foreshortening of the right foot and infelicitous cropping of the composition to fit the shape of the stone. The engraver probably reproduced a famous painting of the Macedonian king by the court painter Apelles, now lost but described in several ancient sources.<sup>198</sup>

Although the general format of glyptic portraits remains constant, the details could differ, particularly in the cropping and framing of the lower portion of the composition. A group of four Ptolemaic female portraits illustrate the different cropping options chosen by engravers during the Hellenistic period (pls. 30–33). The first two examples are both busts showing some portion of shoulders but the framing and treatment of the lower cut diverge. From a garnet intaglio at the Walters Museum, Baltimore, emerges the elegant profile of a Ptolemaic queen (pl. 30). Although the top of the gem is broken, enough of the edge’s curvature remains to be able to reconstruct the cabochon’s shape and placement of the profile. The upper edge must have closely followed the curve of the head down to the braided bun. The line then dips back to echo the contour of the himation hugging the woman’s shoulders and then cuts across her under-tunic, just below the *décolleté*. It then rises up, leaving plenty of room in front of her face not only to give enough “breathing space” for an aesthetically pleasing composition but also to counterbalance the weight

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<sup>197</sup> Stewart 1984, 125. “Since we know our body only in parts, the image is what constitutes the self for us; it is what constitute our subjectivity (...) Furthermore, what remains invisible to us becomes the primary subject of figurative art: the head and shoulders of the portrait and the bust. Because it is invisible, the face becomes gigantic with meaning and significance.”

<sup>198</sup> Cic. *Verr.* 4.60.135; Plin. *HN* 35.92; Plut. *Vit. Alex.* 4.2; Plut. *De Alex. fort.* 2.2 (*Mor.* 335a). For a discussion of the painting, see Stewart 1993, 191–200.

of her elaborate coiffure. As in most such portraits, the upper torso is angled into a three-quarter view to avoid an aggressive foreshortening of the projecting shoulder. The opposite shoulder conveniently melts away under the folds of drapery. In this example, the bust's rim is undefined. Rather, the engraver used the edge of the stone to deal in absolute visual terms with the "border" of the representation. This choice creates a kind of window effect where the viewer expects the body to extend beyond the pictorial frame into the virtual space of the stone.

The engraver of a pendant image on an oblong carnelian intaglio in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, also chose to crop the representation below the décolleté. This time, however, he truncated the bust before the edge of the stone (pl. 31). The abbreviated format appears independent from the pictorial surface. And yet it is not clearly defined since the lower perimeter of the torso progressively disappears into the surface of the stone. The viewer must follow the end of the tunic's folds to determine where the portrait stops and where the pictorial support begins. This solution creates a different spatial effect. While the virtual space seems to recede away from the window through which the viewer peeks in the previous example, here it seems to hover above the reflective surface of the stone.

The last two examples offer a different abbreviated format, i.e., a head with some portion of the neck and drapery visible. But, again, the treatment of the lower edge is different in both cases. A tightly cropped portrait engraved on a garnet in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, ends rather abruptly with the bunched drapery worn high on the neck disappearing at the lower edge (pl. 32). Interestingly, the garment just "vanishes" and does not "contend" with the border like the bust does. The same struggle is found in the pictorial space of the Hermitage intaglio: the lower rim of the bust just melts away, while the elaborate braid impinges upon the stone's edge. In both cases, the effect is similar. It asserts the importance of the head over the body. Conversely, a rounded chalcedony intaglio in Paris from the same typological group bounds the representation at the collar bone, but instead of blending the lower edge of the representation with the surface of the support, as seen on the Hermitage intaglio, it creates an abrupt ridge and deep shadow (pl. 33). This last format recalls sculptural models such as the heads inserted into statues that became particularly popular in the late Classical and Hellenistic periods (pl. 34).<sup>199</sup>

To summarize, most Hellenistic engraved portraits are conceived following the same basic format, i.e., a head or bust positioned high on the pictorial support. This format corresponds to a careful compositional scheme, clearly thought out and devised to be aesthetically pleasing to the human eye. Similar guidelines related to the rule of thirds are used in today's photographic portraits: the face is not placed at the center but higher in the frame. We also observe some general trends in the choice between the two major abbreviated formats (head or bust). Among the Hellenistic engraved portraits illustrated in Dimitris Plantzos' study, nearly two thirds are busts and the rest are heads, sometimes showing some garment at the base of the neck. Of course, very few of these gems have documented provenience and can be precisely dated. Fortunately, the large corpus of sealings impressed with portraits helps paint a better picture. Although busts are attested among the sealings discovered at Seleukeia on the Tigris (before 256—after 129 B.C.), heads remain the preferred format, particularly for private portraits. Among rulers, busts are more common and represent just under half of the sample.

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<sup>199</sup> The unpublished work of reference on the topic is Jacob 2007 (non vidi).

They become particularly popular with Antiochos III and his successors. Moreover, the large majority of ruler portraits found among the sealings from Paphos (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century–ca. 30 B.C.) are busts.<sup>200</sup> We observe a chronological trend that mirrors what has already been observed in numismatics, where heads were preferred in the early Hellenistic period and busts appeared progressively in the second century B.C.<sup>201</sup> However, because of geographical disparities, this criterion should be used with caution as a dating method. For instance, busts seem to have been particularly popular in Ptolemaic miniature portraiture and already appear on gems in the third century B.C. (pl. 35).

### *Abbreviated formats*

Let us return to Baxandall's idea that pictures are solutions to a problem posed in two terms, the *charge* and the *brief*.<sup>202</sup> In the Hellenistic period, the patron would have provided the gem engraver with a very clear *charge*, "I want a portrait!" However, the *brief* (the set of heterogeneous circumstances which influence the object's conception) was determined by factors often independent from the direct agents involved in the picture-making process. For instance, the choice of an abbreviated portrait format must have been informed by specific cultural circumstances related to the significance of the head in Greek art and thought. Traditional full-length formats dispel any concerns related to the particular status of the face. The eye of the viewer can roam over the entire body on display and rarely makes visual "contact" with the representation since its gaze is usually cast down, to the side, or turned to far horizons.<sup>203</sup> However, in abbreviated formats, no such outlet is available. The tension is particularly acute in a medium such as glyptic that denotes microcosm.

The focus on the head seen in nearly all Greek glyptic portraits has crucial repercussions on our understanding of ancient portraiture, particularly on the prevalent distinction between the Greek and Roman conceptions of the genre. The accepted wisdom is that the head in a Greek portrait represented only a part in a larger whole, while in its Roman counterpart it was "like an autonomous adjunct to the body."<sup>204</sup> Thus, in the case of a Greek original, the head would have "lost" its body, being either an archaeological fragment or the victim of modern collecting practices. In the more common case of a Roman copy, the head would have been excerpted to fit the new visual format, display setting, and socio-cultural values of its new context. Since sculpture in the round is the preferred medium of such exegesis and coins have mainly been used

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<sup>200</sup> Kyrieleis 2015.

<sup>201</sup> Richter 1965b, 60.

<sup>202</sup> Baxandall 1985, 30–6.

<sup>203</sup> On the power of the gaze, see Steiner 2001, 172–81, 198–204, 237–8, 296–7. Sheldon Nodelman (1993, 21) describes an opposite phenomenon in Roman portraiture. "The subject of the portrait reflects an awareness of being portrayed; the Roman's gaze is directed upon the spectator (or, if it is averted into private thought, we feel this as only a transient and incomplete withdrawal), and he feels in turn, as we can read his expression, the gaze of the spectator upon him."

<sup>204</sup> Stewart 2003, 47.

as comparative material for identification, very little is made of the numismatic and glyptic emphasis on the head. However, the greater inclusiveness of the present study of Greek portraiture provides some nuance.

Abbreviated formats are traditionally associated with the Roman “head-fetish.” While the full-length portrait remained the preferred format for works displayed in public spaces, smaller compositions appeared in domestic and funerary contexts. Indeed, the herm, freestanding bust, *clipeus*, and half figure became popular in Italy starting in the late first century B.C.<sup>205</sup> They were promptly adopted at the highest level of the Roman social hierarchy, as demonstrated in the numerous examples of imperial busts. They either excerpted the head, neck, and different amounts of the torso from a larger whole in the case of copies of Greek portraits or created new representations including only these corporeal elements. The particular popularity of abbreviated formats in Roman art is often explained by the Roman conception of the face as a “sufficient marker of an individual’s identity.”<sup>206</sup> Even in the case of full-length portraits, the head and body often appear disconnected to the modern viewer (pl. 36).<sup>207</sup> More practical reasons such as cost, ease of placement in constrained spaces, and mobility could also explain the success of abbreviated formats. Moreover, Jane Fejfer has argued that by focusing the gaze of the viewer on the head, a more direct connection was built between the viewer and the patron.<sup>208</sup> It is against this (art) historical background that our appraisal of Greek portrait formats has been built.

The goal of this chapter is not to offer a revisionist assessment. After all, there is no doubt that abbreviated formats “exploded” in Roman art. However, it seems that such portrait formats attested in Greek art have garnered little interest except in punctual studies. Among the better-known and studied abbreviated formats is the herm, which first appeared in the Archaic period. The tapering pillars with anthropomorphic heads were originally reserved for representations of gods, particularly Hermes. In the fourth and third centuries B.C., they were sometimes fitted with head of ephebes, and in the second and first centuries B.C. they appear alongside full-length portraits on grave reliefs.<sup>209</sup> Other abbreviated formats existed in Greece although the archaeological evidence is uneven. First, we have the representation on shield (*eikōn en hoplōi*). The earliest extant example originates from Delos and dates from ca. 102/1 B.C. (pl. 37).<sup>210</sup> Second, medallions with portrait heads or busts sometimes decorated luxury objects such as *klinai* (couches), *pyxis* lids (small boxes), *phialai* (libation bowls), and jewelry

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<sup>205</sup> Pensabene 1977; Stähli 1992; Fejfer 2009, 228–61.

<sup>206</sup> Stewart 2003, 47.

<sup>207</sup> On the phenomenon sometimes called “the appendage aesthetic,” see Brilliant 1963, 10; Hallett 2005.

<sup>208</sup> Fejfer 2009, 228.

<sup>209</sup> Wrede 1985, 71–2.

<sup>210</sup> Chapouthier 1935, 29–34; Neumann 1988. The eight examples of medallion discovered in the Heroon of Kalydon, dated to the second century B.C., represent gods and heroes rather than individuals (Dyggve et al. 1934, 73–81). Dieter Metzler (1971, 198–9) also suggested that the original portrait of Themistokles, known today from an inscribed Roman herm, may have been an abbreviated format on account of Pausanias’ word choice *eikonion*.



dating as early as the second century B.C. and possibly earlier.<sup>211</sup> Among these is a fulcrum bust identified as a portrait of Arsinoe III by Beryl Barr-Sharrar (pl. 38).<sup>212</sup>

The list of abbreviated portrait formats in Greek art grows exponentially with the addition of numismatic and glyptic material. And even in full-length sculptural formats, the head was the focus of special attention. In acrolithic and chryselephantine statuary, the flesh of the head, hands, and feet received a privileged treatment with the use of noble materials such as marble and ivory.<sup>213</sup> Likewise, already in the fourth century B.C., heads were often carved separately and later inserted in stock bodies.<sup>214</sup> But the goal of this chapter is not etiological. I do not want to position these truncated formats as predecessors of their Roman counterparts, but rather as foils. Clearly, the Greeks *were* interested in the face and its representation. How was this interest different from that of the Romans? What was the significance of the head in Greek thought? And how can we explain the peculiar exploration of its representation in miniature formats?

### *Reframing the head*

An etymological approach highlights differences in the conception of the face in Greek and Roman thoughts.<sup>215</sup> Indeed, the terminology used in each language to designate the head shows that they focused on different facial elements, i.e., the eyes in Greek as opposed to the mouth in Latin. The Latin word *os* was the most commonly used term to designate the face, but it also meant “mouth,” “opening,” “entrance,” “orifice,” and even “speech.” The synecdoche emphasizes the ability to speak rather than a physical feature as the defining element of the face. For this reason, *os* cannot designate a static face like a theater mask, as opposed to its Greek equivalent—as discussed below. The mask’s mouth, although present as a plastic feature, is unable to utter without the intervention of the actor underneath. Yet the Latin mask is still conceptualized buccally. Indeed, *persona* derives from the verb *persono* “I speak through” or “I resound.” An etymological explanation emerges readily, as it did for the ancients: the mask was conceived as an implement amplifying the actor’s voice.<sup>216</sup> The Romans had a complex concept of the face and accordingly a rich vocabulary to name its various aspects. The second word used for the face, *vultus*, designated the vehicle through which emotions and character are

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<sup>211</sup> Queyrel 1984; Barr-Sharrar 1987.

<sup>212</sup> Barr-Sharrar 1985; 1987, 67–8.

<sup>213</sup> Despines 1975; Lapatin 2001.

<sup>214</sup> Jacob 2003, 42–6; Dillon 2010, 61–102.

<sup>215</sup> Bettini 2011, 134–68.

<sup>216</sup> This explanation was offered by Gavius Bassus as quoted in Gell. *NA* 5.7. “Gavius Bassus explain the derivation of the word *persona*, in the work that he composed *On the Origin of Words*; for he suggests that that word is formed from *personare*. ‘For,’ he says, ‘the head and the face are shut in on all sides by the covering of the *persona*, or mask, and only one passage is left for the issue of the voice; and since this opening is neither free nor broad, but sends forth the voice after it has been concentrated and forced into one single means of egress, it makes the sound clearer and more resonant.’”

conveyed.<sup>217</sup> Finally, the word *facies* designated more specifically the physical traits or “natural” face.

More generally, the head was extremely important in Roman culture and permeated social life. *Caput*, “head,” could mean “an individual” and losing one’s civil status literally was a “lessening of the head.” Furthermore, decapitation was deemed a particularly heinous and degrading punishment.<sup>218</sup> Indeed, several religious rites testify to the importance of the head in Roman culture. Portraits of ancestors, *imagines maiorum* (sometimes called “masks” in modern literature although it is unclear whether that was their format) fashioned after the physical features of deceased family members, were kept in dedicated cabinets in the atrium of houses, cared for during religious rituals, and brought out and worn by actors or resembling family members at funerals.<sup>219</sup>

The Greek language offers a different conception of the face. *Prosōpon*, often used in the plural in preclassical texts, designated the “face” or “countenance.” In the classical period, it also came to signify “mask” and by extension “dramatic character,” and later stood in for the entire person in *Koine*, particularly biblical, Greek. The word, composed of the prefix *pros-* “in front of” and a stem based on *ops* “eye,” could literally be translated as “that which stands before the eyes [of someone else].” Two aspects of this etymology appear particularly salient: first, the importance of vision and the eyes (*ops* was sometimes used as a synecdoche for the whole face), and second the centrality of a bilateral relation (one’s face is only conceptualized through the gaze of another person).<sup>220</sup> The phenomenon was all the more significant because vision was understood as long-distance touch and deemed a valid epistemological tool.<sup>221</sup> Since reciprocal frontality features prominently in the concept of *to prosōpon*, masks, both theatrical and ritual, came to be encompassed in the definition of the word and its variant *prosōpeion*.<sup>222</sup>

In the Greek world, it is the body and not the head that had a tremendous impact on social relations. It was exercised, displayed, posed, studied, modeled, and discussed.<sup>223</sup> The *prosōpon*, however, was thought to give access to a different dimension of the individual. As early as the second century B.C., the meaning of the word expanded progressively from “face” and “mask” to “character” and “person.” But even before this semantic shift, the face was considered a

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<sup>217</sup> Cicero (*Leg.* 1.9.27) states that the Greeks did not have a semantic equivalent. The etymology of the word is somewhat uncertain but some scholars, both ancient and modern, associate it with *voluntas*, “will” (Isid. *Etym.* 11.34).

<sup>218</sup> Richlin 1999; Hallett 2005, 289.

<sup>219</sup> Plin. *HN* 35.6–7; Polyb. 6.53. For an exhaustive list of literary evidence, see Flower 1996, appendix A.

<sup>220</sup> Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, 19–34. Aristotle (*Hist. an.* 1.8.491b; *Part. An.* 3.1.662a) stresses that humans are the only animals to have a *prosōpon*.

<sup>221</sup> Euc. *Optica*. For influence on later works, see Smith 1996.

<sup>222</sup> Thespis was thought to have introduced the use of masks, after having first painted his face. For a discussion of Thespis and the use of masks, see Pickard-Cambridge 1962, 69–72, 79–82. For depictions of theater masks, see Bernabò Brea and Cavalier 2001; Hart 2010, 42–9, 84–5, 90–1, 136–42; Schwarzmaier 2011.

<sup>223</sup> Stewart 1997, 3–13.

special locus of identity: it is where emotions and thoughts are made manifest. In classical tragedy already, the *prosōpon* stands in for the person because of its very status as conveyer of emotions.<sup>224</sup> In Aristophanes, the very essence of a character is questioned in the absence of a face.<sup>225</sup> However, facial features are rarely discussed or even described in any detail before the advent of physiognomy as a “science” in the early Hellenistic period. It seems that there is a certain reserve in discussing traits because the face is a transparent canvas through which the character of a person can be approached. Indeed, the physiognomy of Socrates is an object of intense concern because his unflattering features—often compared to those of a satyr in ancient text and visual culture—contradict the idea that body and soul should somehow equate.<sup>226</sup>

What transpires from this semantic foray is not that the Romans invested the face with a greater capacity to represent the person than the Greeks *per se*, but rather that the Greeks perceived the face as more revealing. The Roman face is a social instrument: a face to be recognized for political purpose and a mouth to speak. Conversely, the Greek face lacks this social dimension, but it can give access to the very essence of the individual. For this reason, representing the head alone was potentially problematic for the Greeks. By inserting the head in a full-length portrait, balance was restored. Indeed, the body posed in codified gestures presented the socially constructed part of the individual. Thus, it is hardly surprising that Greek artists and patrons favored the miniature and its known association with microcosms to explore abbreviated portrait formats. Furthermore, miniatures often retained sartorial elements associated with status, such as the diadem and cuirass for rulers, and the himation for private individuals. Even when the portrait is engraved as a head rather than a bust, some drapery is usually indicated around the neck (pl. 39.1).

### The Right Profile

The final recurring feature of glyptic portraits relates to the angle of view. The overwhelming majority of portraits on gems are engraved in profile, facing left on the stone and right when impressed. Statistical data clearly demonstrate that these formal conventions were pervasive to a degree that bespeaks accepted codifications and cultural expectations (table 3). Surprisingly little attention has been paid to this observation, although the pictorial choice seems at odds with the Greek conception of the face. Indeed, I have stressed the significance of frontality and visual exchange in the term *prosōpon*. Yet the face of the engraved portrait is almost never seen frontally and its gaze is averted.<sup>227</sup> I propose that this pictorial choice constructs the glyptic portrait (*eikōn*) in opposition to the living face (*prosōpon*).

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<sup>224</sup>Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, 61–2.

<sup>225</sup>Ar. *Ran.* 911–3.

“First, he'd wrap up and sit down someone or other,  
An Achilles, or Niobe, not showing the face,  
a facade of tragedy, not mumbling so much as this.”

<sup>226</sup>Pl. *Symp.* 215a–216d.

<sup>227</sup>On frontal images in Republican glyptic, see Vollenweider 1974, 33–8.

To say that the majority of glyptic portraits follow the same basic format is almost an understatement. Indeed, portraits facing left represent a very small minority of 0.8 to 2.8% in the sealing archives from Kedesh, Paphos, and Seleukeia on the Tigris (table 3). Although it is more difficult to ascertain the distribution among engraved gems, it seems to follow a similar pattern. Identifying the intended direction of viewing is sometimes difficult to ascertain. Was the engraved portrait meant to be seen primarily on the stone, or impressed? Facial symmetry does not allow us to resolve the question easily, unless the subject's physiognomy were to present a unique feature indicating whether the engraved image was reversed on the stone.<sup>228</sup> However, sartorial elements present in some depictions confirm a clear preference for right-facing portraits in the positive. Indeed, several gems depicting generals and rulers present a *chlamys* (cloak) fastened on the left shoulder with a fibula (pl. 24.2). The composition only makes sense once it is impressed since we know from other depictions that a *chlamys* was pinned on the right. Thus, most glyptic portraits were intended to face right. Furthermore, double portraits look in the same direction in a slightly offset superimposition rather than face each other, as found later in Roman glyptic portraiture. Numismatic portraits also testify to this preference. The omnipresence of the right side is hardly surprising since the Greeks considered it the auspicious side.<sup>229</sup> While the origins of such a phenomenon are difficult to identify, several anthropological studies have shown the same directional bias in many societies.<sup>230</sup> Moreover, there seems to be a neurobiological preference for right-facing profiles, although such results could be culturally encoded. Indeed, in a language written from left to right, the latter side connotes the future and its possibilities.

Frontal and three-quarter view portraits are extremely rare. No frontal portraits have been found at Kedesh and only two at Paphos (table 3). The high number at Seleukeia is probably skewed by the misidentification of rather generic heads, likely representing divinities, as portraits. The few portraits engraved in frontal or three-quarter view appear particularly striking to the viewer. On an amethyst in Berlin, a fleshy-cheeked man with a short nose, and lank hair encircled by a diadem peers at us from a three-quarter view (pl. 40). The effect is remarkably different from profile views. The drilled eyes of the engraving seem to gaze intently at the viewer instead of looking into the distance. The slight disconnect between the viewing angle of the draped shoulder seen in the background and the neck enhances the impression of a personal encounter. The man appears to be in the midst of turning his body towards us. The portrait also stands out for its unusual directionality, since it looks to the right in the negative. Clearly, the engraver meant to surprise the viewer not only with the arresting three-quarter view but also with a shift in the function of the object. The portrait is here complete in itself and does not need to be

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<sup>228</sup> To my knowledge, no such ancient glyptic portrait exists. But, for instance, we could imagine a portrait of Philip II of Macedon, who suffered a blinding wound to his right eye at the siege of Methone in 354 B.C. For a discussion of the wound and sources, see Swift Riginos 1994, 106–14.

<sup>229</sup> Arist. *Part. An.* 671b28–37. “The right kidney is always higher up than the left. The reason for this is that as motion always begins on the right-hand side, the parts that are on that side are stronger than those on the other.” Lloyd 1962.

<sup>230</sup> McManus 2002.

impressed to make sense of the composition. Its relation to the (be)holder is unmediated by the sealing process. It is an intimate object to be worn, held, and admired close-up. Other portraits in three-quarter view were impressed onto sealings with the same powerful effect. Among these features a ruler portrait in full military gear from the Edfu hoard, representing one of the late Ptolemies (pl. 41.1). When compared to the more traditional representation of a late Ptolemaic ruler found among the Paphos sealing (pl. 41.2), the difference of effect is quite clear. This time, the viewer is completely excluded. Not only is the engraved gaze averted to the right, but also the bust is barely turned towards the beholder.

While a directional preference for the right side, the “winning” side in Greek thought, is well attested in ancient art, the reason for the prevalence of profile depictions in glyptic portraiture is less readily identified. Let us first discard technical reasons. First, while the shallow depth of most blanks promotes low-relief compositions, it does not preclude frontal depictions. Furthermore, this relative shallowness is preferred by the carver, not dictated by the medium. In fact, thick, cabochon-like stones were sometimes used, such as the exceptional specimen of 1.4 cm of thickness chosen by the engraver Eutyches to carve a superb bust of Athena (pl. 42). Moreover, skilled gem carvers were able to simulate great depth through a clever use of foreshortening or by using a curved background. An oval garnet in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, engraved with the dog star Sirius and signed by Gaios clearly illustrates that deep, frontal representations were possible, although they required great skill to create such details in the recess of the stone (pl. 43.1). The carving plunges deep into the surface of the red stone, appropriately chosen for the brightest star. While difficult to read in the negative, in the positive the hound’s gaping muzzle with minutely carved teeth juts forth under a bulging and somewhat anthropomorphized brow. Furthermore, the fact that profile portraits are not exclusively found in depictions of mediocre quality also supports the idea that the pictorial convention was non-technical in origin. The engraver of a large garnet in the same collection depicting a bearded man wearing a Near Eastern headdress had no difficulties endowing his carving with a credible sense of depth. The skilled modeling of the profile and foreshortened shoulder could easily have been transposed into a frontal depiction (pl. 44.2). Conversely, a mass-produced work, a glass intaglio depicting a female head, shows that credible frontal depictions were achievable even by less skilled craftsmen (pl. 43.2).

### *The profile in context*

Before suggesting possible cultural and artistic causes for this perspectival phenomenon, I would like to probe the etymology of the Greek word for “profile,” since the word for “face” was so permeated by notions of frontality and intersubjectivity. It does not seem that the Greeks had a word for “profile” as we understand it today as “a shape seen or drawn from the side.” Although *plagios* signified “sideways” or “oblique,” it was not used to describe images until the Roman period.<sup>231</sup> Rather, the Greek word often translated as “profile”—albeit rare—*katagraphē* literally means “drawing/carving on or into.” The word referred to the product of carving a low relief or an inscription. By extension, it came to designate the outline in profile that characterizes

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<sup>231</sup> Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, 79.

most low relief carvings. However, what *katagraphē* emphasizes is less an angle of view than a carving technique. The well-known speech of Aristophanes concerning the origins of genders in Plato's *Symposium* clearly supports this understanding:

Before, as I said, we were one being; but now because of this offense we were made to live apart by the god, just as the Arkadians were by the Lakedaimonians. In fact we should well be afraid that if we behave improperly towards the gods, we may once more be split asunder and go about just as those who are carved in outline [*katagraphēn*] on stelae, cut along the nose.<sup>232</sup>

*Katagraphēn* is sometimes translated as “carved in profile” in this passage. However, the term does not refer to any particular visual angle since the comic author felt the need to add the spatial clarification “cut along the nose.” Although the periphrasis could have been selected simply to heighten the farcical effect, it also suggests that there was no accepted expression to describe profiles.

Although the Greeks may not have had a word for profile, they were very much familiar with its artistic use. The large corpus of ancient Greek ceramics and low reliefs confirm that profile drawing and carving were common, even preferred, techniques since the Geometric and Archaic periods, respectively.<sup>233</sup> Furthermore, Pliny's story about the potter Boutades and his daughter, regardless of its authenticity, demonstrates that the profile view was closely associated in ancient minds with the origins of modeling portraits in clay:

It is with the same earth that Boutades the Sikyonian, a potter, first invented the modeling of portraits from clay at Corinth. This happened because his daughter, who was in love with a young man, when he was going abroad, traced on the wall the outline of his face's shadow cast by a lamp. Her father pressed clay onto this and made a relief, which he hardened by exposing it to fire with the rest of his pottery.<sup>234</sup>

Aside from the mimetic topos also found in other origin myths, two salient elements emerge from this anecdote. First, drawing was thought to have preceded sculpting in portraiture; and second the profile view seemed a natural starting point.

Let us consider the second aspect in more detail. Why could the profile view be considered so elemental in artistic practice, while we usually encounter and interact with faces frontally? We must start from the evident observation that a shadow cast in profile is more

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<sup>232</sup> Pl. *Symp.* 193a. Translation adapted from Loeb.

καὶ πρὸ τοῦ, ὥσπερ λέγω, ἐν ἡμεν, νυνὶ δὲ διὰ τὴν ἀδικίαν διωκίσθημεν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, καθάπερ Ἀρκάδες ὑπὸ Λακεδαιμονίων: φόβος οὖν ἔστιν, ἐὰν μὴ κόσμιοι ὦμεν πρὸς τοὺς θεούς, ὅπως μὴ καὶ αὐθις διασχισθησόμεθα, καὶ περίμεν ἔχοντες ὥσπερ οἱ ἐν ταῖς στήλαις καταγραφὴν ἐκτετυπωμένοι, διαπερισμένοι κατὰ τὰς ῥίνας, γεγονότες ὥσπερ λίσπαι.

<sup>233</sup> Korshak 1987.

<sup>234</sup> Plin. *HN* 35.151. Translation adapted from Loeb.

finger ex argilla similitudines butades sicyonius figulus primus invenit corinthi filiae opera, quae capta amore iuvenis, abeunte illo peregre, umbram ex facie eius ad lucernam in pariete lineis circumscipsit, quibus pater eius impressa argilla typum fecit et cum ceteris fictilibus induratum igni proposuit.

unique and potentially identifiable than one cast frontally. Since any internal feature is obscured by the shadow itself, visual cues can only be gathered from the zone of contact where the edge of the shadow meets the lit surface, creating a contour line. In a frontal configuration, key features of a face such as eyebrows, nose, lips, and chin cannot be seen. Conversely, those same elements are clearly visible in profile, although not in the typical configuration that one usually interacts with when confronting a face. However, glyptic portraits are not like cast shadows in that internal elements can be added inside the contour line.

There might also be some neurobiological reasons why pictorializing of the human face as a profile might be appealing to some artists. Studies in cognitive neuroscience over the last decade have clarified the processes involved in face recognition.<sup>235</sup> One result of particular interest is the new understanding of the importance of internal configuration in face recognition. Unlike computerized face recognition systems that usually rely on distances between set features, the human brain uses a different kind of discriminant, i.e, the relation of internal features to the external contour. Observing that portraitists start by drawing an outline of the face, a vertical oval, and then dissect it in proportional segments to plot internal features, scientists discovered that the outer contour is an essential reference point in the perception of faces. Experiments have shown that subjects were much better at assembling a resembling portrait of celebrities from a set of free-floating, pre-drawn features if they were given an outline than when they attempted to accomplish the same task without any external frame.<sup>236</sup> Interestingly, the contour line merges with key facial features in a profile view. In fact, the bulge of the eyebrows, the ridge of the nose, and tubercle of the upper lip align with the external outline of the face.

Although the factors presented above may have impacted the picture-process, we need to address the fact that not all anthropomorphic faces were engraved in profile. Indeed, the preferred view clearly appears as a significant pictorial choice of glyptic portraiture when compared to the diversity of formats used for the representation of gods and heroes in the same medium. Mythological figures are usually depicted in full-length from various angles, sometimes in compositions that reproduce ancient statue types, as shown by the columns on which such figures often lean.<sup>237</sup> The formats used for divinities and heroes in the archive of Seleukeia offers a striking contrast with those used for royal and private portraits (table 4). Likewise, among extant gems, we find many more frontal and three-quarters views of mythological figures such as Gorgo, Helios, Dionysos, Zeus, and Serapis than such angles used for portraits of historical men and women. This contrasting distribution cannot be a coincidence. The profile view clearly differentiates the portrait of an individual from the image of a god.

Let us compare a carnelian intaglio in Berlin representing the god Serapis and a garnet intaglio in Boston engraved with the portrait of an Eastern ruler (pl. 44). Both gems present the bust of a bearded man wearing a headgear. And yet the effect could not be more different. The god confronts the viewer and exudes otherworldly power. His thick beard and lush curls seem to

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<sup>235</sup> For a summary and bibliography regarding experiments related to face recognition, see Sinha et al. 2006.

<sup>236</sup> Balas and Sinha 2007.

<sup>237</sup> Platz-Horster 1970.

float around his face as if gravity had no effect on him. The effect on the viewer is that of an encounter and an epiphany.<sup>238</sup> Conversely, the ruler appears more human, but ignores us. The heavy eyelid, bag under his eye, and marked naso-labial crease bespeak his age and earthly experience. Yet his averted gaze creates an impassable distance from the beholder, as if the ruler existed on an elevated plane. Representing his body is unnecessary, since the headgear and *chlamys* signal his rule and military power. The mortal man is transfigured into the eternal ideal of the ruler.<sup>239</sup>

### *Deactivating the gaze*

We have seen that the profile view in glyptic portraiture was constructed in opposition to the frontality of divine representations. I propose that this pictorial choice deliberately constructs the glyptic portrait as an *eikōn* (image) as opposed to a *prosōpon* (living face).<sup>240</sup> Indeed, the face is involved in most human activities. It houses most elements of our sensory apparatus and speech production: eyes, mouth, nose, and ears. Furthermore, it is encountered in its frontal view in most interpersonal interactions. By choosing the profile view, gem engravers effectively deactivated the power of the gaze.

To better understand the strategy used by engravers, we should look at the use of frontality elsewhere. Indeed, the cultural encoding of the dichotomy between frontal and profile view in Greek art is expressed differently in other media. Ceramic evidence attests to a keen awareness of the power of frontality and its impact on the beholder. Indeed, frontal depictions only appear in very specific contexts in Attic vase painting of the Archaic period, i.e., in Dionysiac scenes and representations of defeated figures, with the Gorgon forming an intermediary zone of overlap.<sup>241</sup> These depictions depart from one of the main conventions of early vase painting, i.e., the integrity of the picture plane as a self-contained two-dimensional world. The frontal gaze punctures the picture plane and invades the viewer's field of vision, creating tension between dimensionalities (pl. 45). For instance, the power of Gorgo to turn its beholder into stone morphs on the clay into the ability to capture the viewer's gaze. The crude face of the satyr and the brazen look of the frontal komast recall the inverted Dionysiac world. The dying gaze of the fallen warrior and other victims creates a direct exchange, and a spatial and empathic rapprochement between the drawn silhouette and the viewer. In Meyer Shapiro's terms, it activates the potentiality of the "I" and the "You."<sup>242</sup>

Other media, such as relief sculpture, and other periods made use of this conceit. On the frieze girding the Great Altar of Pergamon, the mythical battle of the Olympian gods and the Giants unfolds in a third-person—to extend Shapiro's semiotic metaphor—panoptic narrative. Most of the combatants, arranged in pairs or small groups, are completely consumed by the bitter

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<sup>238</sup> For a discussion of epiphanic strategies in cult images, see Platt 2011, 77–169.

<sup>239</sup> For a discussion of royal bodies, see Marin 1981.

<sup>240</sup> Hans Belting (2011, 70) identifies the opposite phenomenon as a catalyst for the modern portrait.

<sup>241</sup> Korshak 1987, 5.

<sup>242</sup> Schapiro 1983, 38–9.



struggle and only present their profiles and sometimes three-quarter views to the beholder. The few exceptions to this rule stand out in their full visual effect. On the iconic East panel featuring the victorious Athena, the Giant Alkyoneus, displayed frontally in a collapsing triangle, gazes up in hope to inspire compassion in the goddess and pity in the viewers (pl. 46). Deeply drilled and tortured eye sockets heighten the power of his silent supplication. On the north side, a nearly frontal lion next to Keto gnaws the forearm of a fallen opponent (pl. 47). His luscious mane recalls the serpentine locks of the Gorgon. The viewer can only freeze, paralyzed by the frightful stare.

As opposed to the examples presented above, no obvious (inter)action explains the diversion of the gaze to the side in glyptic portraiture. Rather, it seems that the semantic power of frontality and its emotional impact are *purposefully avoided*. It is also crucial to note that the deflection is not reserved for ruler portraits, where it could be interpreted as another version of the longing, turned to far horizons, gaze of kings seen in numerous depictions in the round (pl. 48). Indeed, portraits of private individuals are also engraved in profile. Rotating the face on a vertical axis deflects, or at least tempers, the potential activation of cognitive processes and emotional responses in viewers.<sup>243</sup> The pictorial choice may also have lessened the psychological impact of the hybriatic act that is the commission of a private portrait. In profile view, the glyptic portrait could be *both* particularized and distant.

An exploration of the pictoriality of Hellenistic glyptic portraits unveils a zone of tension in Greek portraiture that is easily overlooked in the media privileged by current scholarship. Although we should acknowledge a distinct Greek interest in the human body, we cannot deny a new concern for the status of the face in the late Classical and Hellenistic periods, most evidently in the appearance of abbreviated formats including only the head or bust. The rarefied space of the glyptic miniature focuses the eye of the viewer. There is no body, no drapery, no gesture, and no inscription of noble deeds to “distract.” For this reason, the gaze of the engraved portrait is averted. The *eikōn*, as opposed to the living face, becomes an object of unilateral scrutiny rather than potential intersubjectivity. In doing so, the glyptic portrait not only acknowledges but also celebrates the paradox at the very heart of portraiture, i.e., the absence of the represented subject.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Scientific experiments have shown that the angle of view has a significant impact on the production and decoding of facial expressions and emotions. For instance, the left hemiface is thought to display more emotions than the right and the profile view significantly reduces the perceived degree of intensity of an emotion (Mendolia and Kleck 1991; Guo and Shaw 2015).

<sup>244</sup> Nancy 2014, 18–21.

## CHAPTER 4

### Physicality

#### Materiality and the Body

The previous chapter was concerned with the pictorial choices that define the glyptic portrait as an *eikōn*. We now focus on the object itself, particularly its physicality. To extend the metaphor of the window used previously, we step back from the virtual space beyond the glass to the windowpane itself, its frame, and the location of the aperture. Considering the materiality of engraved portraits and lived experience around them is particularly crucial because of the inextricable bond between images and context in antiquity. Patrons commissioned works for specific purposes and artists fashioned them with an acute awareness of function, although these constraints may not always be clearly identifiable today.<sup>245</sup> Ancient craftsmen were not making “Art” as defined by the influential nineteenth-century war cry “Art for Art’s sake!”—and if they ever fashioned such autotelic creations in the privacy of their own workshops, we know nothing about them. Glyptic portraits were not conceived as stand-alone representations, divorced from their immediate surroundings. Rather, in their conception and making, these artifacts were intimately bound to the human body. They were mounted on settings or chains to be worn as rings, necklaces, and bracelets and used as amulets, mementos, and items of personal adornment. (Seals, and their extracorporeal lives, will be discussed in the next chapter.)

Recent studies of Greek portraits in the round have placed a special emphasis on context and its visual impact on the viewer, speaking of “cultural work done by portrait statues” and “performative qualities of portrait images.”<sup>246</sup> But few glyptic studies address the embodied experience of an engraved likeness. Yet one’s relation to a portrait worn on the body could not be more different from one’s interaction with the full-length portraits that populated cities in the Hellenistic period. We need to speak of “wearers” rather than solely of “viewers.” Virtual reconstructions of the statuary landscape of cities and sanctuaries show how potent the effect must have been on urban dwellers and what impact on the evolution of portrait styles it may have had (pl. 49.1).<sup>247</sup> Dozens of bronze bodies lined the streets, standing erect on tall bases or on horseback, wrapped into the citizen’s garment that transformed the body into an inviolable column or wearing military garb, staring down at the passerby and proudly displaying their names, offices, and deeds carved on the front of the bases for all to see, honor, and hopefully emulate.

Compare the experience of the viewer of an engraved portrait. There was no need to move one’s body along the streets of political centers and sanctuaries, as if directed by the rows of civic exemplars; no need to crane the neck to look upon the faces of these men and women, and shield one’s eyes with a raised hand from the blinding glare of the sun, sometimes reflected on the bright and polychromed surface of the bronze. Beholders of honorific statues could not

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<sup>245</sup> Stewart 1990, 43–55.

<sup>246</sup> Zanker 1995, 45–9; Steiner 2001, 265–81; Dillon 2006, 61–2.

<sup>247</sup> For instance, see Dillon and Baltes 2013a. For a video of the digital reconstruction, see Dillon and Baltes 2013b.

have stopped for long, pressed on by the human current and trying to maintain balance on the uneven, rutted cobbled streets. The awe-inspiring—maybe oppressing or at least intimidating—effect must have worn off with time and repeated trips. After a while, the effigies probably receded into the background, melting into the walls, merging with columns and other architectural features that delineated the urban landscape, only to re-emerge from peripheral vision on specific occasions such as festivals and family celebrations.

Conversely, engraved portraits were carried on the body in a strange liminal space between visibility and intimacy. They were worn as signet rings on the fingers of officials but also of private citizens. And many wearers simply enjoyed them as items of personal adornment. Gems may be at one moment hidden from view, covered by the folds of a garment, and the next appearing on a gesticulating hand during a speech or in a hurry to seal orders. They may be worn under a tunic, tied to a leather string as an amulet. They could be given as love gifts and rest on a chain on the arm or neck of a young woman. Gems were not only in continuous, close proximity with the beholder, they also were handled, touched, examined, held against the sun, coveted, pressed to the lips and then onto wax, and so on. They were taken into one's home, and even into one's private room. They were slipped on and off, in daily, intimate rituals of personal adornment. The embodied experience and perception of the medium could not be more different from that of portraits in the round.

This chapter looks at the physical dimension of engraved portraits, understood both as their materiality and corporeal relation to wearers and beholders. Several aspects of Hellenistic glyptic—technical and contextual—justify a phenomenological approach to the medium. It results a better understanding of processes of perception and meaning-making. The first part of the chapter focuses on the emergence of a new medium during the Hellenistic period, i.e., the use of banded stones upon which to carve portraits in relief. This momentous phenomenon epitomizes a growing emancipation of engraved gems from their original function as seals to objects of personal adornment. The second part presents the literary and archaeological evidence for a close conceptual relationship between bodies and engraved gems. Fully incorporated as elements of adornment, glyptic portraits became crucial mediators in the construction of social identity. A final case study of a “cheap” ring shows how an interest in materiality and embodied use can shed new light on previously scorned artifacts.

### **Cameo: Technical innovation or paradigm shift?**

The great majority of extant engraved portraits from the Hellenistic period are intaglios. They were carved *into* the stone and in the negative (pl. 49.2). Although the engraving can be read and admired on the gem itself, the full impact of the modeling usually appears in an impression.<sup>248</sup> Intaglio carving had been the preferred technique since the beginning of gem engraving during the Bronze Age in the Near East, Egypt, and the Aegean. In these complex and literate societies, engraved gems served social, economic, and administrative purposes as seals.

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<sup>248</sup> Poseidippos may describe the phenomenon in *Lithika* 15. Martyn Smith (2004, 114) translated lines 5-6 as “For after an imprint is taken (*apoplasthen*) the chariot is seen,” but this translation is problematic.

The stones were pressed into a soft and quick-setting material such as clay or wax, to close, secure, and authenticate various documents, containers, or spaces. Once impressed, the inscriptions and devices could be read and recognized more readily if they had been carved in intaglio on the seal.

However, intaglios were not exclusively valued for their practical function as seals but also for their physical properties. For instance, Marian Feldman has demonstrated that Bronze Age cylinder seals resonated particularly with the Aegean population because of their shape and material.<sup>249</sup> Whereas the cylinder seals were mounted on rolling mechanisms and early sealstones were carried on strings, settings became more elaborate and decorative in later periods. In the Archaic period, engravers carved the backs of seals with figurative designs such as beetles, mythological figures, and masks. Temple inventories attest that these miniatures were deemed acceptable as votive offerings.<sup>250</sup> A sign of the evolution from the merely functional seal to an object of pride and display can also be found in the progressive disappearance of scarabs and scaraboids during the Classical period in favor of sealstones set in fixed rings (pl. 50).<sup>251</sup> The device of a scarab was most often concealed when it was mounted on a swivel ring or hung to a chain and only revealed when the owner would remove and turn it during the sealing process (pl. 51.1). Conversely, a ringstone was worn face up for all to see and admire. The device became an object of public display and admiration. Hellenistic epigrams celebrate the engraved gems themselves, not their impressions: the beauty of their colors, the preciousness of their materials, the play of light upon them, and the virtuosity of their craftsmanship are what matters.<sup>252</sup> Some skilled gem engravers even inscribed their name in the positive so that it could be read on the stone itself, thus increasing the cachet of the gem.<sup>253</sup>

The invention of a new medium during the Hellenistic period, known today as the “cameo,” exemplifies the increased interest in making engraved gems objects of contemplation in their own right.<sup>254</sup> As opposed to intaglios, cameos are cut *in relief* (pl. 49.2). Their function is primarily ornamental. Indeed, they make poor sealing devices since they leave negative impressions of their designs.<sup>255</sup> But Hellenistic cameos present an additional characteristic, i.e., the unprecedented use of layered stones to create different picture planes. Indeed, hardstones had been cut in miniature and in relief long before what we call cameo technique. For instance, one

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<sup>249</sup> Feldman 2014, 340–4.

<sup>250</sup> Plantzos 1999, 12–7.

<sup>251</sup> Boardman 1970, 191–3.

<sup>252</sup> Prioux 2006, 131–8.

<sup>253</sup> About forty signatures appear on gems from about 500 B.C. onwards, although more names of gem carvers from which we have no signed works are known from literary sources (supra n. 77).

<sup>254</sup> The date and origins of cameo carving, the subject of much scholarly debate, are discussed in detail in Appendix C.

<sup>255</sup> Only nineteen impressions made with a seal carved in relief are known among the tens of thousands of sealings published! A single cameo produced eighteen of these at Delos (Boussac 1988, 326 n. 71). And an impression of a matrix in relief may have been found at Titani in Greece (Preka-Alexandris 1989, 169).

could describe as such the beetles carved onto the backs of scarabs in Egypt and Etruria, some of which even made of banded stones (pl. 51.2).

Two aspects distinguish Hellenistic cameos from earlier relief carvings. First, the shallowness of the new works could be likened to a reverse intaglio. While earlier miniatures in relief, such as scarabs, are three-dimensional, Hellenistic cameos compress depth into a low relief format. Second, the use of multicolored stones clearly aims at improving the legibility of designs against a recessed plane, usually a light layer carved in relief over a flat, dark background (pl. 52).<sup>256</sup> The new technique also required a heightened knowledge of stone morphology and probably better sources of the raw material. Colored layers often stretch in unpredictable patterns through the stone, unlike the bicolored seashells used for modern cameos.<sup>257</sup> Only a skilled engraver using high quality material could choose a suitable stone and adapt the carving to its meandering layers. A superb fragment of an onyx cameo in Boston shows how layers can impact a composition (pl. 53). The clear band seen as a circular section on the cheek of the Ptolemaic queen brings volume to the modeling. Conversely, the line running from the inner canthus of the eye to corner of the lips muddles the sharp line of the profile.

Moreover, the introduction of the new carving technique entailed a certain number of changes to the craft and required more time and effort at every step of the process. Indeed, cameo carving is slower when compared to intaglio engraving because more material needs to be removed with less contact between the drill bit and the stone's surface.<sup>258</sup> Moreover, craftsmen employed time-consuming techniques to increase the contrast between stone layers. We know from ancient sources and material evidence that porous stones such as chalcedony, and other stones selected for cameo carving, were treated with various color enhancement techniques in order to deepen the shade of dark bands and thus accomplish an even greater tonal difference between light and dark layers. Indeed, soaking a stone in an active liquid and then heating it in a protective environment (such as ashes) induced color changes. Pliny explains that the most common additive used for such enhancement was honey, "particularly Corsican honey, which is unsuitable for any other purpose due to its acidity."<sup>259</sup> The acid solution made porous stones particularly receptive to color changes induced by heat. The chemical reaction is akin to that of caramelizing sugar. The dark layers of the stone turn to richer hues, from brown or bluish-grey to black.<sup>260</sup> The process would sometimes be repeated in order to reach deeper levels of the stone as it was being carved. In sum, the enormous care and extraordinary craft involved in the manufacture of cameos testify to a deep concern for enhanced visibility.

If appraised simply as a new technique available to specialized craftsmen, subservient to other elements such as iconography and degree of particularism, this innovation seems rather

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<sup>256</sup> Some specimens inverse the use of layers with a dark relief over a light background, but the method is always the same: it plays with values of light rather than colors.

<sup>257</sup> For this reason, ancient "gemologists" distinguish onyxes from agates, although they both are forms of chalcedony. Cameo carvers preferred the parallel bands of the former over the curved, sometimes chaotic layers of the latter.

<sup>258</sup> Lapatin 2015, 115.

<sup>259</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.195.

<sup>260</sup> For more on ancient treatments, see Nassau 1994, 6–13.

negligible and of little pertinence to a discussion of Hellenistic portraiture. However, if considered from the viewpoint of materiality and visibility, the new technique represents a real paradigm shift. The approach opens new perspectives on the perception and function of engraved gems in the Hellenistic period. Portraits are no longer buried in the shadowy recesses of the stone. Rather they project forward in a more legible format and in well-lit shapes clearly delineated against the dark background. They are complete in themselves and do not need to be impressed onto a malleable material in order to “speak.” Whereas the intaglio teetered between an item of personal adornment and an administrative tool, the cameo sits unapologetically in the former category.

The main reason for a lack of scholarly interest in the embodied use of engraved gems is that the original function of intaglios as seals has eclipsed most other frameworks in modern studies. However, the development of Greek terminology and idiom betrays a certain porosity between artifacts used as seals and as items of adornment. Indeed, the terms *sphragides* and *sphragidia*, which originally described a seal, became more generally used for any kind of gemstone, even unadorned, mounted on a ring by the late Classical and early Hellenistic periods.<sup>261</sup> Conversely, the words *lithos* (“stone”) and *daktylios* (“ring”) could designate an engraved bezel to be impressed.<sup>262</sup> Furthermore, it is clear from literary sources that ancient viewers valued engraved gems for their beauty and optical properties (often perceived as magical). Poseidippos’ epigrams, which have previously been discussed, convey superbly the allure of ancient gems.

If the function of intaglios can be ambiguous, that of cameos is not. Gems carved in relief were not used as seals. In fact, their entire visual language is built on an aesthetic of display. The adoption of a two-toned material demonstrates a keen attention to readability. The comparison of three miniatures representing Ptolemaic queens or divinities best illustrates the visual differences of three carving techniques. The first head, now kept at the Michael C. Carlos Museum in Atlanta, was carved three-dimensionally from a garnet (pl. 54.1). Although fragmentary, it was probably not meant as a miniature in the round, as indicated by the hollowed out and smoothed back, but rather as an insert in some setting, such as a ring or a hairpin (pl. 54.2). Although the volume and attractive color of the miniature invite the eye to meander over the visage, the highly reflective surface muddles its features. Depending on the lighting conditions, the viewer might see a dark red oval with a protrusion in the middle, or sharp features delineated abruptly and somewhat randomly by competing reflections, as illustrated in the photograph. Light plays a large part in the visual appeal of such objects, as evidenced by the purposeful hollowing-out of the back. To enjoy the full effect of the carving, the miniature needs to be held, rotated, and examined closely. The portrait on the second specimen, an intaglio in the British Museum, cannot even be perceived fully unless it is impressed onto a soft material or cast in a strong, artificial light as in the photograph (pl. 55.1). The shallow carving disappears into the recesses of the dark material, here colored glass (pl. 55.2). Once again, only handling and manipulating it can do justice to the engraving.

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<sup>261</sup> Plantzos 1996a, 117 n. 11.

<sup>262</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 15; Ar. *Thesm.* 425; Arist. *Mem.* 450b; Pl. *Hp. mi.* 368b–c.

When compared with the previous two engravings, the third appears more legible and yet complex (pl. 56). Two planes stand out: the creamy face and upper torso, and the rich brown mass of lustrous hair. Taken individually, both are readable and distinct. The straight nose, fleshy lips, round chin, long neck, and voluptuous bosom emerge clearly from the dark, bluish void below. And the elaborate hairstyle of dark, luscious ringlets hovers like a curtain over the white skin. Yet the viewer is puzzled. Which layer comes first? The eye immediately perceives the binary essence of the composition, but cannot neatly resolve its deployment in three superimposed layers. The beholder becomes quickly caught in a recursive loop, dark-light-dark. The visual pleasure results from this fascinating tension within the work. Likewise, the cameo presents a puzzling sort of stacked perspective. Seen as a whole, the work gives a convincing impression of depth built from back to front. And yet each layer functions on its own volumetric terms as if different anatomical units—skin versus hair—are dissociated from the whole and then squeezed between the rigid parallel planes of the stone. Following linear perception of depth, the upper edge of the hair should be contiguous with the outline of the profile. Conversely, the *uraeus*, the snake’s head at the top of the diadem, should be cut from the same layer as that of the headdress and the proper right shoulder should project farther than the locks and thus impinge upon and even traverse the dark brown layer. Nothing of the sort happens. The irresolvable cipher of the layers both fascinates the viewer and maintains legibility in most display situations.<sup>263</sup>

### Bodies and engraved portraits

Beyond the current “material turn” of visual studies, the distinct trend in antiquity toward an increased appreciation for engraved gems as objects of personal adornment justifies an embodied approach to the study of glyptic portraits. Moreover, ancient literature shows that writers closely associated engraved gems with the human body. Poseidippos of Pella communicates this idea nowhere better than in the following epigram:

No neck or finger of any woman wore this carnelian  
but it was prepared for a golden chain  
this lovely gem bearing the image of Darius—and under him  
an engraved chariot stretching the length of a span—<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> For this reason (and many others explained in Appendix C), I find unconvincing Elizabeth Kosmetatou’s reading of Poseidippos’ epigram 8 as describing a cameo (Kosmetatou 2003). The poet clearly describes a translucent stone whose qualities are enhanced with the play of light. However, stones used for cameos are not usually translucent nor is their legibility improved by such play of light.

<sup>264</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 8, lines 1–4. Translation from Austin and Bastianini 2002.

οὐτ’ ἀκχλὴν ἐφόρησε τὸ κάρδιον οὔτε γυναικῶν  
δάκτυλος, ἠρτήθη δ’ εἰς χρυσέην ἄλυσιν  
Δαρειῶν φορέων ὁ καλὸς λίθος – ἄρμα δ’ ὑπ’ αὐτὸν  
γλυφθὲν ἐπὶ σπιθαμῆν μήκεος ἐκτέταται –

Although the large gem was not worn but rather displayed on a wall or other such context, the pride of place given to the negative statement only reinforces the customary setting of gems. The poet's opening line invokes the body when none is present. Clearly, a significant part of the appeal of engraved gems lay in their corporeal associations.

Ancient writers and readers were keenly aware of the permeability between the human body and the outer world, especially at the point of contact, i.e., the skin. Another poem by Poseidippos conveys this phenomenon:

Rolling yellow [rubble] from the Arabian [mountains],  
 the winter-flowing [river] quickly [carried] to the sea  
 the honey-colored gem engraved by the hand of Kronios.  
 Mounted in gold [it lights up sweet] Nikonoe's  
 inlaid necklace, as on her breast  
 the hue of honey glows with the whiteness of her skin.<sup>265</sup>

The extended metaphor blends Nikonoe's physical envelope with the gem. The honey color of the stone materializes the mild disposition of the maiden and in the last line combines with her skin in a symbiotic relationship. Other poems use an ambiguous vocabulary to describe gemstones, one that could be applied to the body.<sup>266</sup> Terms identifying body parts also abound in such epigrams. A fine engraving is likened to "the mark on a nail."<sup>267</sup> Pliny also compares the layering of sardonyx to a human fingernail, maybe referring to the slight change in shade of the lunula, the crescent-shaped area at the base of a nail.<sup>268</sup> Furthermore, in his encyclopedic work, gemstones are even mapped out according to their physical qualities on a binary conception of the human body: some are said to be "male" or "female" because they display "an outline that distinctively portrays the organ of its sex," while other varieties display more or less luster or different hues according to the same gender distinction.<sup>269</sup>

The juxtaposition of gemstones and attractive female body parts such as the breast (*mastos*), bosom (*stethos*), arms, hands, and feet—described as "desirable" or "lovely"—in several epigrams translates poetically the erotic charge and tactile impulse produced by the intertwined surfaces of skin and stone.<sup>270</sup> Indeed, gems and other objects carved from precious stones populate scenes of courtship. Poseidippos writes about such scenarios:

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<sup>265</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 7. Translation from Austin and Bastianini 2002.

ἐξ Ἀράβων τὰ ξάνθ' ὀρέων κατέρ]υτα κυλίων,  
 εἰς ἄλλα χειμάρρους ὄκ' [ἐφόρει ποτα]μὸς  
 τὸν μέλιτι χροίην λίθ[ον εἴκελον, ὄ]ν Κρονίου[ν] χεῖρ  
 ἔγλυψε· χρυσεῖοι φικγ]κτ[ ±11 ]η  
 Νικονόηι κάθεμα τρη[τὸν φλέγει, ἦ]ς ἐπὶ μαστῶι  
 κυκλάμπει λευκῶι χροτὶ μελιχρὰ φάη.

<sup>266</sup> For instance, the use of *leptē* (delicate) in *Lithika* 1 could either apply to the Indian stone or to the young woman wearing it, Zenobia.

<sup>267</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 15, line 5.

<sup>268</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.86.

<sup>269</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.106, 157.

<sup>270</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 4, 6–9.



Heros takes [pride] in this gem [esteemed] by all;  
it has on it a picture of Iris engraved [by Kronios,]  
this sparkling little [beryl]. The cubic stone was [well] attached  
to the golden [necklace] of Nikonoe  
and came as a gift, [a new delight], to lie on her breast,  
a welcome brightness on the [maiden's] bosom.<sup>271</sup>

Or:

Timanthes engraved this star-like lapis lazuli,  
this Persian semi-precious stone containing gold,  
for Demylos; and in exchange for a tender kiss the dark-haired  
Nikaia of Kos [received it as a desirable] gift.<sup>272</sup>

The close relation between love/desire, *eros*, and art in ancient Greece is well known.<sup>273</sup> The etiological myth of portraiture itself associated the love and longing of a maiden for her departing lover with the creation of the genre.<sup>274</sup> Furthermore, engraved portraits were given as love-tokens or mementos in several works in prose and verse.<sup>275</sup> And the use of rings in love magic and spells is also widely attested.<sup>276</sup>

Engraved gems could provide suitable excuses for close contact between bodies. Ovid writes about a certain Tibullus who on several occasions tried on the seal of his mistress as a pretext to touch her hand.<sup>277</sup> Rings were slipped on and off in erotically charged moments. Hands would touch and fingers would cradle a precious and personal object taken from the desired hand, wrist, or neck. An anecdote told by Plutarch concerning the intimate, and possibly amorous, relationship of Alexander the Great with his childhood friend Hephaisstion illustrates the erotic undertone of such interactions.<sup>278</sup> Hephaisstion once came upon Alexander while he was reading from the secret correspondence that he maintained with his mother during his

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<sup>271</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 6. Translation from Austin and Bastianini 2002.

τῶιδε λίθῳι πᾶσιν δ[.....]εται Ἡρώς,  
ἔλκει δὲ γραπτὴν ἴρινα [  
τοῦτο τὸ μαρμαῖρον β[ηρύλλιον· εὔ] δ' ἐπεδήθη  
Νικρονόης ὁ κύβος χρύσει[ον εἰς κάθε]μα,  
καὶ δωρητὸς ὑπῆλθ[ε .....]η, κατὰ μακτὸν  
κλίνεσθαι στήθεων π[..... ἥ]δὸν πέλας.

<sup>272</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 5. Translation from Austin and Bastianini 2002.

Τιμάνθηος ἔγλυψε τὸν ἀστερόεντα κάπειρον  
τόνδε χρυσίτην Περσικὸν ἡμίλιθον  
Δημόλωι· ἀνθ' ἀπαλοῦ δὲ φιλήματος ἢ κυανόθριξ  
δῶρον Ν[ικαί]α καὶ Κόια εἰς

<sup>273</sup> Stewart 1997; Steiner 2001, 185–250.

<sup>274</sup> Plin. *HN* 35.151 is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

<sup>275</sup> Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 16–7.

<sup>276</sup> Faraone 2001.

<sup>277</sup> Ov. *Tr.* 2.451–2.

<sup>278</sup> Plut. *Vit. Alex.* 39.5–6.

campaign. The king let his friend lean next to him to read the letter but then removed the seal from his hand and pressed it on Hephaistion's lips. Not only is Plutarch's description of the scene one of striking intimacy—"Hephaistion quietly put his head beside Alexander's"—but also of obvious erotic undertones, especially if juxtaposed with the episode of Philip's prophetic dream also related by Plutarch.<sup>279</sup> Some time after his wedding to Olympia, Alexander's future mother, Philip dreamed that he put a seal representing a lion upon his wife's womb, thus foretelling the birth of the leonine conqueror.

The most elaborate account of intimate interaction with a glyptic portrait comes from one of the earliest extant romances in prose, *Kallirhoe* written by Chariton of Aphrodisias in the late first century B.C. or the early first century A.D. Later writers sometimes derided the novel as "light" literature, but its popularity among ancient readers makes the work particularly relevant to our discussion.<sup>280</sup> It tells the fictional—although based on some historical figures and events—peregrinations and tribulations of the eponymous heroine, the beautiful daughter of Syracuse's ruler, to reunite with her husband Chaireas. Kallirhoe is believed dead after she was (nearly) fatally kicked by her husband during a fit of jealous rage and laid to rest with luxurious funerary gifts. Upon being "rescued" by grave-robbing pirates, she forgoes all the rich assemblage left in her tomb and keeps only a ring, saying "the little ring which I wore even as a corpse will satisfy me."<sup>281</sup> The reader learns only later the significance of the jewel, when Kallirhoe bemoans her upcoming fate as a slave:

As she beat her breast with her fist, she saw on her ring the image of Chaireas, and kissing it, she said, "Chaireas, now I am truly lost to you, separated by so vast a sea. You are repenting in grief as you sit by the empty tomb, bearing witness to my chastity after my death, while I, the daughter of Hermokrates, your wife, have today been sold to a master."<sup>282</sup>

Although the text is unclear as to the exact provenance of the ring, it implies that it was part of Chaireas' possessions, which he insisted be burnt with his wife.<sup>283</sup> The engraved gem becomes a posthumous love-gift from a grieving husband. Several times during the story, the ring is used as a narrative device and stand-in for an absent Chaireas. At one point in the story, the glyptic portrait even serves as a model to fashion a statue of the young man.<sup>284</sup> Kallirhoe's interaction with the ring becomes extremely intimate and tactile. Soon after being sold as a slave, she discovers that she is bearing a child and must ponder her precarious situation.

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<sup>279</sup> Plut. *Vit. Alex.* 2.2-3.

<sup>280</sup> Pers. 1; Philostr. *Epistolae* 66.

<sup>281</sup> Chariton, *Kallirhoe* 1.13. Loeb translation.

<sup>282</sup> Chariton, *Kallirhoe* 1.14. Loeb translation.

<sup>283</sup> Since it is clear from the subsequent events that Kallirhoe's body was not cremated, Chaireas' request is probably meant to highlight the exceptional character of the funeral by comparing it to Patroklos' (Hom. *Il.* 23).

<sup>284</sup> Chariton, *Kallirhoe* 4.1. "In the procession was carried a portrait of Chaireas modeled on the seal of Kallirhoe's ring."

Going upstairs to her room and shutting the door, Kallirhoe held the image of Chaireas against her womb and said, “Behold, we are three—husband, wife, and child! Let us plan together what is best for us all.”<sup>285</sup>

Not once is the ring used as a seal, although it is described as a *sphragis* in the Greek text.<sup>286</sup>

Whether engraved portraits were used as seals, mementos, amulets, or items of personal adornment, their handling always activated the body and fired up its senses. Indeed, the only time the poet Poseidippos uses the word *sphragis* in his *Lithika*, he does not address the function of the object but rather creates a sensory background, conjuring up sound, sight, and touch in only a few lines of verse.

[You chose] as seal, Polykrates, the lyre of the bard  
who used to sing at [your feet].

[It has a light with golden] rays; and yours was the hand that held  
[this gemstone, a most famous] possession.<sup>287</sup>

Polykrates, the sixth-century B.C. tyrant of Samos, chose the device on his seal based on auditory memory and pleasure. The poet conjures a vivid mental image of the scene with corporeal specificity. The singer sat not only in close proximity to Polykrates but more specifically “at his feet.” Likewise, the tyrant did not only possess the gem conceptually but also physically—he held it in his hand. Poseidippos’ choice of focus is especially telling since the ancient sensorial hierarchy seems to have preferred “distant” senses such as sight and hearing over the “proximal” smell, taste, and touch.<sup>288</sup> But other epigrams by the same poet such as that about Nikonoe’s “honey-colored” gem, quoted above, creates an entire microcosm by invoking all five senses as well as notions of time and space.<sup>289</sup> Sight appears in several places with mentions of colors and light. We can almost hear the sounds of the river, carrying the “rolling pebble.” The “hand of Kronios,” the engraver, and “the white skin” of the maiden is a haptic invite. The “mountains” and “sea” invokes specific smells in the mind of the readers, while “honey,” mentioned twice, appeals to their sense of taste. Finally, the mentions of Arabia and winter situate the reader spatially and temporally.

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<sup>285</sup> Chariton, *Kallirhoe* 2.11.

<sup>286</sup> Chariton, *Kallirhoe* 4.1.

<sup>287</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 9. Translation from Austin and Bastianini 2002.

ἡμῆς]@ σφρηγ[ῖδα], Πολύκρατες, ἀνδρὸς αἰδοῦ

... φο]ρμίζ[οντος σοῖς] παρὰ π[οκ]τὶ λύρην

.....]εν κρ[.....]. αὐγ[. . ἔσ]χε δὲ σὴ χεῖρ

....]εκρ[ ±11 ]. ν[.....]ν κτέανον.

<sup>288</sup> Arist. *Sens.* 437a.

<sup>289</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 7. Translation from Austin and Bastianini 2002.

Rolling yellow [rubble] from the Arabian [mountains],  
the winter-flowing [river] quickly [carried] to the sea  
the honey-colored gem engraved by the hand of Kronios.

Mounted in gold [it lights up sweet] Nikonoe’s  
inlaid necklace, as on her breast

the hue of honey glows with the whiteness of her skin.

Engraved gems were also believed to have positive effects on bodies. Ancient patrons seem to have been particularly partial to the optical properties of precious stones, some of which were perceived as medicinal and nearly magical. Pliny reports that *smaragdi*, an umbrella term used to designate a variety of green stones, were thought to have ophthalmological virtues:

Indeed, even after straining our sight by looking at another object, we can restore it to its normal state by looking at a “smaragdus”; and engravers of gemstones find that this is the most agreeable means of refreshing their eyes: so soothing to their feeling of fatigue is the mellow green color of the stone.<sup>290</sup>

The fame of the green stone’s property was such that the emperor Nero was said to watch gladiatorial combats through an emerald slab (or “on,” the Latin being unclear). Some scholars have bemoaned the difficulties experienced in looking at or photographing engraved gems, particularly intaglios, and some have even advocated solely using impressions for the purpose of illustration.<sup>291</sup> While such measures might be advantageous for the modern reader, these shortcuts obscure a crucial part of the appeal of gems for ancient viewers. Their chameleonlike appearance constituted a fundamental reason for their qualification as “marvels,” as stated by Poseidippos in an epigram quoted above.<sup>292</sup>

As mentioned earlier, gems were even thought to have magical powers, particularly in relation to the protection of the body. Glyptic amulets tend to represent various divinities with protective attributes as well as magical incantations.<sup>293</sup> Nevertheless, the portraits of iconic historical figures could sometimes serve as powerful apotropaic devices. The numerous specimens engraved with the image of Alexander the Great, particularly of the Lysimachos-type with the horns of Amun or with the long flowing hair of late Hellenistic bronzes and marbles, were probably used for amuletic purposes. They were manufactured from a variety of materials from expensive precious stones to mass-produced glass. Among these figures a unique tourmaline intaglio with the horned portrait of the Macedonian conqueror, bought in Beirut and now kept in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (pl. 57.1). Underneath the neck, a mysterious inscription in Karosthi, Brahmi, or South Arabian script testifies to the popularity of the device in different cultures.<sup>294</sup>

## Adornment

Now that an increased interest in the visibility of engraved gems and their association with bodies has been established, we must look at the *body as a locus of display* through the lens of sociology and anthropology, and most particularly through the theoretical framework of adornment theory. Engraved gems inhabit the liminal, sometimes uncomfortable, space between practical objects as seals and items of personal adornment. The stigma attached to luxury,

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<sup>290</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.63–4. Loeb translation.

<sup>291</sup> Boardman 2001, 10.

<sup>292</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 13.

<sup>293</sup> Entwistle and Adams 2011; Mastrocinque 2012.

<sup>294</sup> For a summary of the different readings and corresponding references, see Plantzos 1999, 118, no. 142.

particularly its perceived uselessness and vacuity, has often colored the modern appraisal of media such as ancient glyptic.<sup>295</sup> Fortunately it has long been recognized by sociologists that jewelry, under the umbrella term of “adornment,” can serve a variety of social, religious, political, and ideological purposes.<sup>296</sup> From this perspective, adornment is understood broadly as the intentional manipulation of the body’s appearance through dress, decorative artifacts, and corporeal modifications such as tattooing and scarification.<sup>297</sup> The Greeks favored the first two categories. There is indeed very little evidence of body modifications with the exception of alterations related to the wearing of jewelry such as stretched earlobes.<sup>298</sup>

Scholars have proposed many frameworks to approach adornment, including environmental or supernatural protection, physical attraction and its role in the survival of humanity, and the nature/culture distinction. However, the theory that seems most applicable across time and cultures defines adornment as a symbolic expression of society.<sup>299</sup> At the heart of this understanding is the basic human need to belong to a group and communicate identity through visual signs. An interesting dichotomy emerges from the phenomenon: adornment participates *both* in the formation of a *group identity* and in the *distinction of the individual*. I want to address here the former aspect, and the next chapter focuses on the latter. There is no doubt that the Greeks were interested in defining social roles in their artworks. Indeed, in the last thirty years, specialists in portraiture have repeatedly shown how ancient portraits, far from being “realistic” or unmediated images of their subjects, were in fact socially constructed.<sup>300</sup> I

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<sup>295</sup> Lapatin 2015, 1–17. Although he “rescues” jewelry, John Boardman (1996, 3) still writes, “jewelry is luxury, but unlike real luxury, it is not completely useless, since it can serve the purpose of displaying status and wealth.”

<sup>296</sup> Already in 1908, the sociologist Georg Simmel (Simmel 1950, 278–81) published a short but seminal “Note on Adornment” in which he describes the phenomenon’s meaning as “to single the personality out, to emphasize it as outstanding in some sense—but not by means of power manifestations, not by anything that externally compels the other, but only through the pleasure which is engendered in him and which, therefore, still has some voluntary element in it.” Among the most influential recent works are Douglas 1996; Entwistle 2000.

<sup>297</sup> Roach-Higgins and Eicher 1992, 1–2.

<sup>298</sup> Boardman 1996. In Greek art and thought, tattoos were associated with foreigners and slaves. Conversely, ear studs or “tunnels” have been found in several sanctuaries and graves at Thasos, Paros, Chios, Samos, Herakleia under Latmos, Dikaia in Thrace, Brauron, and Ephesos (Brein 1982). Although most are made of rock crystal, some gold specimens have been found in Rhodes, Cyprus, and Bin Tepe (near Sardis), and excavations at Apollonia on the Black Sea have also yielded glass examples (Chacheva 2015). Scholars have long tried to describe these artifacts as lenses, buttons, or stands for small vessels, probably in an attempt to dissociate the Greeks from what was perceived as “barbarous” customs. The facts that they are found in pairs near the skull in tombs and Archaic sculptures show very large earrings (albeit no “tunnels”) leave little doubt as to their function.

<sup>299</sup> Entwistle 2000, 58.

<sup>300</sup> Smith 1993; Zanker 1995.

argue that, conversely, items of adornment such as engraved gems could situate the wearer in society.

Ancient writers were keenly aware of the use of engraved gems as status markers. The comic playwright Aristophanes was particularly fond of the metonymic association between wealthy citizens and their jewelry, and used the literary trope to create biting social satires. In *Clouds*, sophists, thinkers, and artists are described as a useless lot, inspired by the Clouds (their patron goddesses):

They (the goddesses) nourish a great many sophists, diviners from Thurii, medical experts, longhaired idlers with onyx signet rings, and tune bending composers of dithyrambic choruses, men of highflown pretension, whom they maintain as do-nothings, because they compose music about these Clouds.<sup>301</sup>

Not only are highly decorative rings associated with dandies, but the comic writer also invents a polysyllabic neologism (the tongue-twister *sphragidonuchargokomētes*) based on adornment (hair and rings) to describe the group. In *Assemblywomen*, “those with signet rings” are opposed to the ordinary people.<sup>302</sup> Other writers such as Antiphanes and Eupolis also associated rings with fops and wealthy idlers.<sup>303</sup> More importantly, wealthy and powerful figures acknowledged openly that engraved gems counted among their most prized possessions.<sup>304</sup> For instance, the aforementioned Samian tyrant Polykrates valued his seal to such an extent that when he was advised to cast away his most cherished possession to avoid the jealousy of the gods for his good fortune, he threw the gold and emerald ring engraved by the great jeweler Theodoros into the sea.<sup>305</sup> This last anecdote shows that displays of wealth represent more than mere signs of ostentation and vanity. They are intimately linked with social strategies, present and future.

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<sup>301</sup> Ar. *Nub.* 331–4. Loeb Translation.

... πλείστους αὐται βόσκουσι σοφιστάς,  
Θουριομάντεις, ἰατροτέχνας, σφραγιδονυχαργοκομήτας·  
κυκλίων τε χορῶν ἄσματοκάμπτας, ἄνδρας μετεωροφένακας,  
οὐδὲν δρῶντας βόσκουσ' ἀργούς, ὅτι ταύτας μουσοποιῶσιν.

<sup>302</sup> Ar. *Eccl.* 631–2.

... καὶ δημοτικὴ γ' ἡ γνώμη καὶ καταχήνη  
τῶν σεμνοτέρων ἔσται πολλὴ καὶ τῶν σφραγίδας ἐχόντων,

<sup>303</sup> Antiphanes, *Fragment* 188 (quoted in Ath. 8.342e); Eup. 204.

<sup>304</sup> Pl. *Hp. Mi.* 368b–c. “Certainly you are the wisest of men in the greatest number of arts, as I once heard you boast, recounting your great and enviable wisdom in the market-place at the tables of the moneychangers. You said that once, when you went to Olympia, everything you had on your person was your own work; first the ring—for you began with that—which you had was your own work, showing that you knew how to engrave rings, and another seal was your work...”

<sup>305</sup> Herodotos 3.40–1.

## *Costly signals and value*

Economically irrational and potentially wasteful behaviors such as adornment have long fascinated scholars. In the late nineteenth century, Thorstein Veblen coined the term “conspicuous consumption” to describe the ostentatious displays of the Victorian élite.<sup>306</sup> Pierre Bourdieu preferred the expression “symbolic capital” in his study of taste.<sup>307</sup> But scientists have also observed a similar phenomenon in the animal world. For this reason, evolutionary biologists have proposed a “signal theory” that could explain such human *and* animal behaviors in terms of cost/benefit and communication among individuals:

The costs of such strategies are outweighed by the benefits gained through manipulating social relationships with other individuals. The apparent paradox of wastefully expending time and wealth is dissolved if the cost of the display functions to ensure that only high-quality individuals can afford them at all. Thus, the signal value of conspicuous consumption is maintained by its costs; these costs in turn are the price wealthy individuals pay for prestige.<sup>308</sup>

The notion of “cost” appears central to the whole endeavor since its nature will determine the intensity of the signal and benefits reaped by the signaling individual. It is thus essential to determine the cost of engraved gems. Two factors govern the determination of value. First come the elements that can be quantified metrically, i.e., how much metal and energy was spent in the production. Here the “signal” is viewed as a “commodity.” Second, value can be indexical or symbolic. I will call this kind of valuation “currency,” in the sense that it is based on a shared value system. For instance, some forms of adornment impede wearers in their ability to move freely and accomplish any menial task. Such physical restraint can be an index of their status as “non-workers” or, as per Veblen, members of the “leisure class.”

Let us first review the evidence regarding the cost of engraved gems as commodities. Ancient texts are rife with stories of extravagant prices paid for jewelry and engraved gems, but little is known about the specific costs of raw material and labor.<sup>309</sup> The mother of the fifth-century B.C. Athenian Alkibiades was rumored to possess a set of adornments (*kosmos*) worth fifty minae (or about 50 pounds of silver!).<sup>310</sup> Roman authors tend to be more explicit as to the sums involved, probably because of their overt (albeit hypocritical) rejection of luxury.<sup>311</sup> They repeatedly mock their contemporaries for the astronomical sums spent to acquire works in hardstone. Pliny claims that the emperor Nero purchased a myrrhine (probably a kind of feldspar) bowl for 1,000,000 sesterces, enough to buy between 500 and 1000 slaves! Other prices mentioned for the same type of ware range from 70,000 to 300,000 sesterces.<sup>312</sup> More

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<sup>306</sup> Veblen 1899.

<sup>307</sup> Bourdieu 1979.

<sup>308</sup> Bliege Bird and Smith 2005, 223.

<sup>309</sup> Labor costs were generally low. The weight of raw material mattered most, as demonstrated recently with the case of bronze sculpture (Stewart 2015, 43).

<sup>310</sup> Pl. *Alc.* 1.123c.

<sup>311</sup> Cicero was prompt to criticize the excess of Gaius Verres (supra n. 198) but himself bought a table made of precious wood for the enormous sum of 500,000 sesterces (Plin. *HN* 13.92)!

<sup>312</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.18–20.

importantly, an anecdote about the fourth-century B.C. Theban musician Ismenias related by Pliny exemplifies the impact that conspicuous consumption had on prices themselves.

Ismenias the pipe-player was in the habit of wearing a large number of brilliant stones and there is a story associated with his vanity. In Cyprus, a “smaragdus” with the figure of Amymone engraved upon it was offered for sale at a price of six gold pieces. Ismenias ordered the sum to be paid and, when two of the pieces were returned to him, he exclaimed, “Heavens! I’ve been done. The stone has been robbed of much of its value.” It is Ismenias who appears to have brought in the fashion whereby all musical accomplishments came to be assessed partly in terms of this kind of lavish display.<sup>313</sup>

Although the sum (6 aurei or 600 sesterces) is much lower than the fortunes paid for large myrrhine vessels, it still represents a considerable investment, enough to buy about two slaves during Pliny’s time. Furthermore, the fair value of gemstones as commodities is almost irrelevant in the context of such costly signaling. The spending itself created value.<sup>314</sup> Ismenias proved his point; centuries later and hundreds of miles away people still gossiped about his profligacy.

The fame of the maker and identity of the consumer also impacted costs. We know that some engravers enjoyed specific renown. Poseidippos mentions the names of Kronios, Timanthes, and Lynkeios.<sup>315</sup> Other epigrammatists praise Tryphon, and Pliny adds Apollonides and the court engraver of Alexander the Great Pyrgoteles.<sup>316</sup> Works by those artists surely came at a premium—better skill equals more demand. Unfortunately none of their creations are extant today, with the possible exception of a cameo with the “wedding” of Cupid and Psyche signed by a Tryphon and a fragment possibly by Apollonides.<sup>317</sup> However, the ever-increasing number of signatures found on engraved gems between the Archaic Greek and Roman periods indicates that illustrious artistic pedigrees increased their cachet. Engravers were allowed, and possibly encouraged, to add their signatures even on royal portraits (pl. 24.2; 30).

Ancient consumers were particularly fond of gemstones because of their physical properties such as shininess, which had tremendous currency in the Greek culture. Indeed, Pliny describes in several instances how merchants and buyers would classify materials according to their fire, transparency, and/or luster (depending on the type of stone).<sup>318</sup> These optical qualities echo ancient Greek ideas concerning the divine and the supernatural.<sup>319</sup> By covering their bodies with rich, shiny surfaces, wearers could abduct the physical qualities of superior beings. Likewise, some colors were preferred for their association with power. For instance, Hellenistic portraits are usually engraved on red and purple stones, probably because of the color’s

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<sup>313</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.6–7.

<sup>314</sup> James Porter (2012) has argued that objects gain value because they are “collecting points of attention.”

<sup>315</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 2, 7, 15.

<sup>316</sup> *Anthologia Graeca* 9.544; Plin. *HN* 37.8.

<sup>317</sup> Boardman 2009, 30–35, no. 1 (Tryphon); Zwieler-Diehl 1986, 95–7, no. 142 (Apollonides).

<sup>318</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.28, 56, 63, 66, 68, 70, 77, 83, 98, 106, 126.

<sup>319</sup> Homer’s heroes and gods are described as shiny, sparkly, and gleaming (for examples, see *Il.* 1.104; 4.75–8; 19.374–6; 21.415; 22.25–32).



association with royalty. About a third of royal portraits listed by Dimitris Plantzos were engraved on garnets, and more than half if we include all red and purple stones such as amethyst, jacinth, ruby, and carnelian.<sup>320</sup>

Engraved gems also gained currency through their own “life histories” from being mined in distant places to being collected and passed down from generation to generation.<sup>321</sup> In acquiring material from exotic, faraway places consumers made themselves “masters over space.” Such purchases signaled their control of or at least privileged access to scarce resources.<sup>322</sup> Indeed, Pliny locates the origins of the most sought-after gems in India, not only because some stones indeed came from there, but also because the traders would spin tales of exotic travels and dangers to add to the appeal of their wares.<sup>323</sup> Indeed, India lay at the edge of the known world and securing an object hailing from such origins would carry great prestige. Furthermore, engraved gems were kept in circulation long after their manufacture and valued for their illustrious provenances. Wearers could make themselves “masters of time” in associating their mortal bodies with centuries-old heirlooms. The few examples of Hellenistic gems discovered in archaeological contexts show that they were preserved for generations and even centuries before being deposited or lost. For instance, an eye-agate engraved with the portrait of a Hellenistic ruler found its way to Viroconium (now Wroxeter) in England, where it was lost in the *macellum*, the Roman marketplace, centuries after it was made (pl.57.2).<sup>324</sup>

The assemblage discovered in the Artyukov Barrow in Crimea in the nineteenth century offers one of the best illustrations of the use of adornment as costly signal. The grave goods deposited in the female burial, dated to the middle or third quarter of the second century B.C., contained an impressive array of luxurious items of adornment—all in gold.<sup>325</sup> The list (and images; pls. 58–60) is dazzling: a laurel wreath, a frontlet set with garnets and beaded pendants, a hairpin with carnelian pendants on small chains, a pair of earrings with enameled birds, a twisted torque, a chain necklace with calf head finials, a segmented necklace with openwork beads, another with round beads, a medallion with Aphrodite and Eros in repoussé and three embossed appliqués on her chest, a pair of snake armlets, another of twisted bracelets, a plain band and a snake ring on her right hand, and five rings on her left. The latter were all set with stones or decorative bezels, including a garnet intaglio engraved with a standing female figure, an onyx cameo showing Eros chasing a butterfly, a blue chalcedony bezel, a sandal-shaped and inscribed gold bezel, and a broken bezel of iron (?). The body was also covered with a luxurious cloth, of which only some gold threads remains.

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<sup>320</sup> About garnets, see Spier 1989.

<sup>321</sup> On the spatial and temporal dimensions of skilled craft, see Helms 1993, 28–51, 109–27; for the deposition of heirlooms as grave goods in the Iron Age at Lefkandi, see Antonaccio 2002.

<sup>322</sup> For the comparable use of exotic colored marbles in Roman times, see Mielsch 1985, 28–31; Allen 2015, 155–6.

<sup>323</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.200–1. “The rivers that produce gems are the Chenab and the Ganges, and of all of the lands that produce them India is the most prolific.”

<sup>324</sup> Henig and Webster 1983.

<sup>325</sup> Concerning the burial and its dating, see Appendix C.

Although the financial cost of this particular set is unknown, its currency appears in several of its material characteristics. The deceased must have been quite a sight. Nearly every inch of her body was covered with shiny metals and glittering gemstones (predominantly red carnelians and garnets), from her dress to her hairdo. The effect would have been magnified by the mobile, light-catching elements of the jewelry such as the chains and beads at her temples and in her hair. Interestingly, the most fragile rings, those set with engraved gems and stone bezels, were placed on the left hand, where they would sustain the least damage during daily activities. Some may have been heirlooms or at least artifacts of some age. Indeed, a long drill hole running vertically through the dark background of the cameo indicates that it had previously been mounted on a swivel ring (pl. 60).<sup>326</sup> A linear crack just above the head of Eros probably explains the replacement of the original mount. The ring in which it is now set is itself worn, indicating that the cameo was used for some time.<sup>327</sup> Finally, some pieces of the jewelry set came from distant places such as Egypt. That is surely the case of the delicate pair of earrings with enameled birds that feature Isis crowns concealing the hooks and possibly of the cameo.

*Lost and found: A “portrait” from Alexandria*

Although many specialists of glyptic wish they could get specific information about the archaeological contexts of engraved portraits, such data are rarely available. Glyptic portraits have been collected since the Renaissance and even earlier and tracking the meandering path of these artifacts through cryptic comments such as “said to be from” is often pointless. Does that mean that nothing can be said about the embodied use of these objects? Of course not. But the loss of such information has impeded the study of engraved gems beyond iconography and identification. I propose to use as a case study a ring in the British Museum said to be from Alexandria (pl. 61) to demonstrate how an approach based on the materiality and embodied use of the engraved portrait can offer a new way forward.<sup>328</sup>

The large ring engraved with the head of a woman was allegedly found at the Rosetta Gate in Alexandria. The provenience, albeit credible, is largely unsubstantiated. The ring came into the possession of the British Museum through the 1897 bequest of Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks (1826–1897), the first Keeper of its British and medieval antiquities.<sup>329</sup> Franks’ legacy is so impressive that he has sometimes been hailed as “the second founder of the British Museum.” He spent most of his life working tirelessly and gregariously to broaden and strengthen the

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<sup>326</sup> A chain would theoretically be possible as well but the wear at each ends of the cavity supports the former scenario. The band of a swivel ring applies more stress to the stone than a chain.

<sup>327</sup> These observations were made from photographs and closer inspection is needed. It would be interesting to reconstruct how the five rings were worn relative to one another. Unfortunately the excavation reports, dated 1879 and 1880 (*infra* n. 474), do not offer much information as to the exact placement of each item. Still, relative size of each hoop could provide enough information for such a reconstruction.

<sup>328</sup> Walters 1926, no. 1229; Marshall 1968, no. 1615.

<sup>329</sup> Caygill and Cherry 1997.

collections of the museum through purchases, gifts, and even personal donations, including about 750 finger rings and 350 pieces of jewelry offered to the department of Greek and Roman antiquities. Franks probably acquired our ring from a European dealer during one of his yearly travels through Western Europe. It is reasonable to think that he held the provenience story from the dealer or auctioneer. Nonetheless, Alexandria is a plausible findspot of the artifact, since such a ring shape (tapering hoop and high shoulder) has long and securely been associated with Ptolemaic Egypt (pl. 50, type IV). As for the Rosetta Gate, it is again a plausible story, even if somewhat convenient and picturesque. Although the gate now straddles a park and built area in the center of modern Alexandria, the Rosetta Gate presented a picturesque sight in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was a common source of inspiration for Alexandrian *vedute*, replete with ancient ruins and locals on camel back, and a must-see stop in nineteenth century guidebooks. Furthermore, the site was the location of the ancient Canopic Gate, the main entrance on the eastern side of the Hellenistic city. Although the provenance story fills the beholder's mind with exciting fantasies, it provides nothing in the way of archaeological context.

The ring would garner little interest in most studies of Hellenistic glyptic, and even less of portraiture. On the highly convex intaglio of dark blue or violet glass, the head and upper chest of a young woman faces left. Her hair, loosely twisted along the temple and above the ear, is pulled back into a low bun at the nape of her neck. Drapery wraps around her long, fleshy neck and is gathered at the front. Her features are rather generic and typical of non-royal, female portraiture of the time: a classical profile with a straight nose, full lips, and rounded chin. Some elements of the iconography also borrow from the visual vocabulary of Ptolemaic female portraits such as the large eye, Venus rings around the neck, and classical hairstyle. However, the absence of any royal attribute, particularly the diadem, precludes any convincing identification as a Ptolemaic queen. Thus, the image is either dismissively pushed into the "private portrait" category or sometimes identified as Arsinoe III on shaky grounds.<sup>330</sup>

Yet the materiality of the ring and intaglio provides a wealth of information and offers some clues as to the *value of the object as a signal*. The intaglio from which the portrait emerges is neither engraved nor a gemstone. The pitted surface covered with brown accretions and small iridescent flakes identifies the material as glass, while the uneven surface in the recesses of the "engraving" indicates that it was mold-made rather than hand-carved. Such "stones," often—and mistakenly—called "glass pastes" in modern literature, were mass-produced and destined for popular consumption, as indicated in ancient literary sources and material evidence.<sup>331</sup> Ancient craftsmen devised two techniques to manufacture such glass impressions: ground or chipped glass would be placed in a mold and then heated; or molten glass would be poured and pressed into the cavity. Either way, only relatively simple designs could be reproduced without losing too many details. The dark blue or violet color of the intaglio imitates either a blue gemstone such as lapis lazuli or the blue quartz sometimes called sapphire in ancient sources, or a dark stone of

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<sup>330</sup> Boardman and Vollenweider 1978, 87; Walker and Higgs 2001, 98–9, no. 118.

<sup>331</sup> Glass paste is a modern invention. Ancient craftsmen simply used glass. Pliny explains how glass was used to counterfeit many gems to great profit (*HN* 37.83, 98, 112, 128, 197–8) and was associated with the lower classes (*HN* 35.48).

purple hues such as an amethyst.<sup>332</sup> All of these stones would have been greatly prized for their exotic origins. Lapis lazuli was believed to come from Persia, although it originated in fact from farther east, in today's Afghanistan, and merely traveled *through* Persia.<sup>333</sup> This imagined source of origin carried an enormous prestige, as demonstrated in Poseidippos' epigrams.<sup>334</sup> By the Hellenistic period, the blue stone flecked with gold already had a long and illustrious history: it had been used for millennia in Near Eastern and Egyptian jewelry and glyptic. As for the amethyst, its rich color had made it a favorite of wealthy patrons and its hardness a challenge for skilled engravers. We already catch a glimpse of the strategy at play in the choice of material: the intaglio is a "pretender."

The masquerade extends to the ring itself. The shape, characterized by a thick band flaring toward a large bezel with a high shoulder, is typical of a kind of metal (usually gold) ring found in Egypt and other areas under Ptolemaic control and dated to the third and second centuries B.C.<sup>335</sup> Interestingly, like other rings made of cheap material such as glass, this limestone version features a very large bezel (4.1 cm in height).<sup>336</sup> The ostentatious nature of the object, heightened by the strong visual contrast between the matte whiteness of the limestone and the dark shimmer of the translucent stone, must have caught the eye of the buyer. Once worn on a finger, it would have represented a "loud" statement, if not exactly a "costly signal."

In fact, the British Museum ring co-opts not only the appearance of costly signals but also their social dimension. The large intaglio conjured possibilities of administrative dealings as a seal, and the device, recalling the style of dynastic portraits, suggested elite status. Yet the brittleness of the glass and its porous nature (and thus its tendency to stick when impressed) made it a poor material both for engraving and use as a seal. If worn on the left hand, which was the preferred side as indicated in archaeological discoveries and pictorial representations, the portrait would have faced away from the wearer.<sup>337</sup> This seems to be confirmed by the chips on

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<sup>332</sup> Pliny (*HN* 36.198) writes that glass can "reproduce the appearance of fluor-spar, blue sapphire or lapis lazuli." True sapphires, although they were known in antiquity, could not be engraved with such intricate designs at the time because of their hardness (9 on the Mohs scale). Conversely, the softer quartz (7 on the Mohs scale) was cut using corundum powder in a wet solution.

<sup>333</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.120. "Lapis lazuli also is blue and is only rarely tinged with purple. The best is found in Persia..."

<sup>334</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 8, 11.

<sup>335</sup> Plantzos 1999, 37, type IV.

<sup>336</sup> Six glass rings, discovered in Cyprus and now at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, measure over 4 cm in height (Karageorghis et al. 1999, 132–3, no. 219). Other examples include Marshall 1968, nos. 1562-72; Boardman and Vollenweider 1978, 87–8, no. 303. For a silver ring, see Plantzos 2002 (see n. 8 for additional references).

<sup>337</sup> For instance, a female mummy mask showing the head, upper torso, and hands of the deceased discovered at Antinoe and dating from the third century A.D. (Louvre, Paris, inv. E 21360) shows that while rings were worn on both hands, the right hand would bear small or plain bands while the most ostentatious rings were reserved for the left hand. The same division is

the left side and lower edge of the bezel. In most personal interactions, especially when the hand was held up, any interlocutor would have been able to read the device easily, and thus would have experienced the full force of its borrowings from the realm of more costly “signals.” Ancient sources describe this phenomenon of appropriation. Pliny bemoans in no uncertain terms the rampant vulgarization of rings as status markers:

As soon as rings began to be commonly worn, they distinguished the second order from the commons.... Consequently a rule was made that nobody should have this right except one who was himself a free-born man whose father and father’s father had been free-born also, and who had been rated as the owner of 400,000 sesterces and had been entitled under the Julian law as to the theatre to sit in the fourteen front rows of seats. Subsequently people began to apply in crowds for this mark of rank.... and there are frequent cases of men who are actually liberated slaves making a leap over to these distinctions, a thing that previously never occurred.<sup>338</sup>

What of the portrait itself? The representation lacks any real sense of particularism and could very well be dismissed as uninteresting by many. Yet I propose that the genre of the device is here much more significant than any identification. Too many such “portraits” have been associated with various Ptolemaic queens regardless of the absence of any royal insignia. This is missing the very point of such mass-produced items of personal adornment. If Aristotle reminds us that the ancients saw the materiality of portraits as a source of pleasure, I would argue that it also was a locus of meaning-making.<sup>339</sup> The anonymity of the portrait—for us and probably for the ancient viewer as well—does not constitute an aporia. Rather, it leads us to a new understanding of the popularity of “generic portraits” in Hellenistic glyptic. Whomever the ancient wearer saw in the features of the female bust engraved on the Alexandrian ring may be irretrievable in its historical singularity. The broader public, however, already attuned to such generic female portraiture at every scale and in every medium, would have likely associated the bust with the woman wearing the ring.<sup>340</sup> The aspirations attached to the daily use of the artifact are easily teased out. The owner of the ring wanted to be “seen” and associated with elite social status through the use of its trappings.<sup>341</sup> The humble ring abducts the values of costly signals.

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observed in the female burial of the Artyukov Barrow. Full-length portraits of the Greek and Roman periods also confirm this observation.

<sup>338</sup> Plin. *HN* 33.29, 32–33.

<sup>339</sup> Arist. *Poet.* 1448b15–19. Translation adapted from Loeb. “This is why people enjoy looking at portraits, because through contemplating them it comes about that they understand and infer what each element means, for instance that ‘this person is so-and-so.’ For, if one happens not to have seen the subject before, the image will not give pleasure *qua* mimesis but because of its execution or color, or for some other such reason.”

<sup>340</sup> On female portraiture, see Jaeggi 2008, 97–135; Dillon 2010.

<sup>341</sup> Evolutionary biology would call this a “dishonest signal.”

## CHAPTER 5

### Sociality

#### Networks of Power and Agency

In his seminal essay on adornment, Georg Simmel compares the universal radiance of ornamental materials to the desired social effect of the practice.

Adornment intensifies or enlarges the impression of the personality by operating as a sort of radiation emanating from it. For this reason, its materials have always been shining metals and precious stones. . . . One may speak of human radioactivity in the sense that every individual is surrounded by a larger or smaller sphere of significance radiating from him; and everybody else, who deals with him, is immersed in this sphere.<sup>342</sup>

We may think of Simmel's conception of adornment as a kind of gravitational theory. Bedecking the body with precious metals and gemstones manifest a desire to attract other bodies into one's own sphere of influence. In such a system, the jewel is a lure and a social mediator. We have seen in the previous chapter that the use of engraved gems as objects of personal adornment situated the wearer in a social constellation. Their simultaneous use as seals, personal insignias allowing the dissemination, securing, and authentication of one's will, transcends Simmel's theory. The signet represents both an epidermal encrustation and an extrasomatic extension of the person. The distribution of a sphragistic device through impression releases the agentive energy of an individual or a social entity, like rays pushing against the gravitational contraction of a star. A seal is not merely a symbol of social aspirations; it becomes a substitute for the individual, the office, or the social group using its device in various social networks.

The present chapter looks at the potency of seals as "agents" of social construction rather than simple markers thereof.<sup>343</sup> Although the very possibility of objects' agency has been questioned, mostly on Cartesian grounds (intentionality and consciousness would be a requirement for the transmission and reception of agency), it is nevertheless acknowledged that the complex entangling of beings with the physical world weakens the dichotomy actor/object and suggests a more fluid concept is needed.<sup>344</sup> More importantly, the ancients believed in the agency of objects, particularly of effigies.<sup>345</sup> The aim of the chapter is not to argue in favor of a specific terminology for the "agency of objects"—may it be affect, effect, abduction of agency, mediation, etc—but rather to offer another contribution to the undisputed observation that some objects have a particular role in and impact on social relations. Looking at the literary and material evidence concerning the socio-economic use of portrait seals, this chapter argues that observed differences in the deployment of royal and non-royal portraits stem from the distinctive types of agency at play in each case. The ruler relinquishes the personal and administrative use of his image in order to *construct power at second hand*. Conversely, the centralized distribution

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<sup>342</sup> Simmel 1950, 339.

<sup>343</sup> Gell (1998) refers to objects as "secondary agents" in that they "abduct agency."

<sup>344</sup> Davis 2007. For a summary of Gell's argument and criticism, see Tanner and Osborne 2007.

<sup>345</sup> Collins 2003, 37–45.

of private portraits participates in the development and *enactment of direct agency* by private individuals.

### Portraits as seals

A full understanding of the social use of engraved portraits requires a study of their deployment as devices on seals. Unfortunately the literary evidence is meager. While it testifies to a widespread use of seals at various echelons of society from kings to common people, the exact nature of the devices is usually left untold.<sup>346</sup> Ancient texts, from tragedies to court documents, provide hundreds of mentions of seals and impressions (both *sphragides* in Greek) but only a handful of summary identifications of the device, often a divinity or mythological figure, and no detailed description apart from the lyrical *ekphraseis* of Poseidippos of Pella.<sup>347</sup> None of them mentions engraved portraits even though we know that glyptic art was so revered that Alexander the Great appointed the gem carver Pyrgoteles as one of his portraitists.<sup>348</sup> These omissions may have been intentional since secrecy surrounded seals. According to Diogenes Laertius, the sixth-century B.C. Athenian statesman Solon enacted a law forbidding gem engravers to retain impressions of the seals they carved, presumably to avoid identity theft and tampering with legal documents.<sup>349</sup> Fortunately the material evidence helps to paint a clearer picture.

### Material evidence

A limited set of documents and containers, mostly papyri discovered in small caches in Egypt, retain both the support and sealings still attached—at least upon discovery and recording.<sup>350</sup> This evidence provides invaluable information concerning the use of engraved portraits. Among the thousands of papyri that have been recorded since the beginning of papyrology as a discipline in the eighteenth century, less than two hundred were discovered with their sealing(s) still preserved. And among these, only eighty papyri (secured with ninety-three sealings) date from the Hellenistic period and are published along with descriptions of the

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<sup>346</sup> *P. Cair. Zen.* IV 59659, a theft report, represents a notable exception. The victim of the “highway robbery” (and “donkey-jacking”!), a man of limited means whose name is lost, lists among his stolen valuables an iron ring with the engraved image of Hermes worth one drachma. This price may have been common for modest seals since several other sources mention it too (*Ar. Plut.* 883–4; Antiphanes, *Fragment* 175).

<sup>347</sup> A single epigram by Poseidippos (*Lithika* 9) unequivocally describes a seal. For a non-exhaustive list of literary sources, see Arrington 2005, 62–87. Unlike Roman wills discovered in Egypt, earlier documents do not describe the seal used by the contractants and witnesses (Vandorpe 1996, 231, 243–5).

<sup>348</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.8.

<sup>349</sup> Diog. Laert. 1.57.

<sup>350</sup> Katelijjn Vandorpe (1996) provides a list to be supplemented with an online database (2010). Concerning sealing practices and terminology, see Appendix A.

sealings (table 5).<sup>351</sup> While the set spans the entire period, its provenance is geographically restricted to Egypt where the dry climate favored conservation. But, with an ironic reversal of fortune, the preservation of the writing support has often resulted in a “death sentence” for the sealings themselves in the long run. Indeed, many sealings have disintegrated—unfired clay poses conservation challenges—or have been lost after being separated from their documents.

Although small, the sample of eighty sealed documents and containers offers an enlightening dossier concerning the ancient use of portrait seals. First, it confirms the omnipresence of seals in Greek life and their important social role. Only seventeen of these documents (about 21%) were secured with a lump of clay that had not been impressed with a seal (table 6). Their sealings were either left blank or impressed with fingertips. While a personal seal was not absolutely necessary to conduct official business—indeed several sealings on contracts were left blank next to the signature of the interested parties—the great majority of patrons had some such device at their disposition and made use of it.<sup>352</sup> In some rare cases the same seal was impressed next to the signatures of two different parties, usually members of the same family or representatives of the same office. For instance, in a will drawn by a husband and wife discovered in Elephantine, two brothers used the same seal depicting Artemis (table 5, nos. 787–797; pl. 62.10–11). It is possible that one of them was too young to own such a device, since the terms of the contract suggest that the couple’s sons were still unmarried. Moreover, the notaries of Pathyris, named Hermias I and Ammonios, interchangeably used two seals, one representing a female profile with a helmet and the other a horned portrait of Alexander (table 5, nos. 887, 889, 891, 893, 895–897). The documents also show that widespread seal ownership was not restricted to Egypt but rather was common all around the Mediterranean. For instance, the parties and witnesses of four contracts also found at Elephantine, all dating from between 310 and 282 B.C., hail from a variety of geographical origins from Kyrene to Syria, and from Thrace to Alexandria (table 7). All of them possessed seals and impressed them upon the contracts.

Second, the group of sealed documents from Egypt attests that portraits represent a minority among devices. The distribution of matrices by subject shows that portraits account for less than a quarter of these (table 8). And within this category, ruler portraits are even rarer. The representation of Alexander with the horns of Amun should be set aside in a different category since the deified image of the Macedonian conqueror acquired amuletic properties during the Hellenistic period. The horned portrait used by the notaries of Pathyris between 101 and 98 B.C. would probably not have been considered a “ruler portrait.” This image and the frontal Alexander seen on a will from Elephantine (pl. 62.6) should probably be considered alongside the divinities and heroes populating the bezel of most seals.

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<sup>351</sup> The list was put together mainly from written descriptions since photographs are rare and/or of poor quality, and many sealings are now lost.

<sup>352</sup> It should be noted that a single six-witness contract, of a late date, does not present impressed sealings (table 5, nos. 872–873). Furthermore, the four notary contracts left unimpressed would have been kept by the notary, who was the party expected to seal this type of document, making the practice possibly superfluous (table 5, nos. 874, 876, 880, 892). As described by Vandorpe (1996, 234), over time the registration of legal documents by the local administration probably became more important than the process of sealing to insure authenticity.



Third, the documentation shows that engraved portraits were used as seal devices in a variety of documents and circumstances from public to private. It should be noted that no container was secured using such a device, although the finding may be inconclusive because of the limited size of the sample (only ten containers). Conversely, diademed profiles were affixed to a wide variety of documents: a six-witness contract, a receipt, an official letter, and an oracular letter (table 5, nos. 805–813, 923, 976, 1008). Although the small number of such portraits suggests some form of regulation, the administration does not seem to have enjoyed a monopoly over the image of rulers. The owners of the seals were, respectively, a witness to a marriage contract, a Greek banker, a military official, and a temple official. Interestingly, the only royal ordinance in the set was not sealed with a portrait of the ruler but rather with an eagle holding a thunderbolt in his talons, a well-known symbol of the Ptolemies found on their coinage and associated with the founder of the dynasty (table 5, no. 1243; pl. 63.1).

Since the set of sealed documents originated exclusively from Egypt, one may wonder what the impact of the geographical concentration may have on our assessment of the distribution and use of engraved portraits. Fortunately archives of sealings (discovered without their written support) provide further evidence. The two largest of such hoards, found at Seleukeia on the Tigris and Delos—totaling over 40,000 sealings combined!—offer excellent samples for statistical analysis since they cover two different geographical areas (respectively the Near East and Greece), chronological timeframes (early to middle, and middle to late Hellenistic), and types of archive (official and private).<sup>353</sup> Interestingly the distribution patterns of portraits in the two archives are strikingly similar and echo that from the corpus of sealed documents from Egypt (table 9). 21% of matrices at Seleukeia and 10% at Delos bear a portrait of some kind and within these only 8% represent rulers. The archival data confirm that engraved portraits represented a small minority of devices on seals and that royal images were only a small portion of these.

Differences in the distribution of engraved portraits between both archives can help further characterize trends in usage. Looking at variations in the distribution of matrices versus impressions proves particularly useful (table 8).<sup>354</sup> Indeed, matrices provide information concerning individuals (in the case of a privately owned seal) and administrative groups (in the case of an official seal) involved in dealings recorded in the archive. Conversely, the frequency of impressions relates to the level of involvement of each individual or office. The principal administrators of an archive can be identified through the large number of impressions of their seals. In the case of the archives of Seleukeia and Delos, the distribution patterns support what was already documented archaeologically, i.e., that the former archive was public while the latter was private.<sup>355</sup> Indeed, the greater portion of portraits at Seleukeia may be attributed to a more

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<sup>353</sup> For a summary of the discoveries and bibliographical references, see Appendix A.

<sup>354</sup> In any given set of sealings, the number of matrices rarely corresponds to the number of impressions. Indeed, the same matrix can be impressed more than once. Appendix A provides definitions of key terms.

<sup>355</sup> The fact that nearly half of all impressions found at Seleukeia were made with stamps belonging to the Seleukid administration indicates that the archive was public. Other elements including the size and location of the building support this conclusion. On the other hand, the

diverse pool of individuals patronizing the archive. Interestingly, while this archive has yielded nearly double the number of portrait matrices than the Delian one, the internal distribution between royal and non-royal portraits is remarkably consistent with images of rulers representing only about 8% in both cases. Not only was the use of the royal image restricted, but also it does not seem to have had any special role in an official archive when compared to a private one, as opposed to what has sometimes been suggested.<sup>356</sup>

The low representation of portraits in the frequency of impressions—less than half when compared to matrices—supports the notion that the image of the ruler was not particularly associated with the official administration (table 9). If offices typically used his image for official seals, one would expect to find the opposite trend: a few royal portrait matrices generating a large portion of the impressions. The phenomenon is best illustrated at Seleukeia with a group of 162 matrices, mainly non-figurative but inscribed with the title of an administrative office and date of the Seleukid Era (pl. 63.2).<sup>357</sup> The inscriptions clearly identify these as official stamps used by functionaries of the sale registrar and various tax offices. They represent only 3% of the total number of matrices but nearly half of the total number of impressions!

### *Network of Seleukeia*

The main difficulty with studying sealings found in archives relates to the loss of specific context, since the sealed documents and their content were destroyed in the very event that preserved the lumps of clay, usually a fire. But the offsetting benefit provided by such hoards stems from their nature as closed, largely independent systems, which can be mined for “big data” as opposed to *ad hoc* discoveries such as the caches of Egyptian papyri. Modern tools such as network analysis can reconstruct patterns of use, in our case the deployment of engraved portraits as seal devices, and deduce the general content of the original documents. Indeed, the visualization of relations between discrete actors, objects, or locations through graphs can be fruitfully applied to the study of sealing archives.<sup>358</sup> Just like written documents, sealings manifest in the archaeological record social and economic interactions between ancient individuals, groups, and administrative offices. Although the names of these social entities are

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Delian archive was found in a house in a residential area and contained few inscribed administrative seals. These elements point to the private character of the archive.

<sup>356</sup> Plantzos 1999, 22.

<sup>357</sup> Messina and Mollo 2004, 3–32.

<sup>358</sup> Wasserman and Faust 1994; Knappett 2013. The technique was first applied to Hellenistic sealing archives, without digital help, in a study of the sealings discovered at Delos in 1974–1975 (Auda and Boussac 1996). To my knowledge, it has not been used since then, probably because few archives are fully published and none is accessible though an online database.

lost, matrices can be considered as visual representatives of the persons originally interacting within the physical enclosure of the archive.<sup>359</sup>

We first need to define the “world” and “system” used for the network analysis. As in Chapter 2, the hoard of over 25,000 sealings discovered at Seleukeia on the Tigris—ranging from simple medallions impressed with a single matrix to large bullae bearing multiple impressions—offers an excellent case study because of its breadth, number of portraits, documented archaeological context, and systematic publication.<sup>360</sup> It is necessary to keep in mind the official nature of the archive, which impacts the type of relations that can be observed when compared to private archives such as that found at Delos. Matrices, identified by their iconographical designation and number as labeled by the Italian editors, were chosen as the nodes structuring the network. As such they stand in for the individuals or groups interacting within the archival building. Because many matrices appear in association with others on the same sealing and/or make repeated appearances in the records, a complex network of relations between nodes (called “edges”) can be reconstructed.<sup>361</sup> A sealing bearing different matrices testifies to the gathering of several persons at a single moment and place for a specific socio-economic purpose. This otherwise ephemeral encounter was preserved through the concomitant impression of seals before the clay dried. Such networks are better understood visually in the form of a graph.

Although the whole sample of sealings from Seleukeia could be subjected to a network analysis, the present study selected ruler portraits as the primary nodes and extended edges to the second degree (pl. 64). The choice to exclude non-royal portraits as primary nodes has relatively little impact on the final result since over 90% of such matrices are only known through a single impression, thus radically curtailing the potential number of significant edges. Furthermore, about half of the remaining non-royal portraits, and all except one of those appearing in more than 100 impressions, are represented in the present graph since they were connected to royal portraits by the second degree. The reasons for this choice are both practical and technical. First, the database used to record and later to publish the sealings from Seleukeia is not available to outside researchers.<sup>362</sup> Second, the published catalogue is organized iconographically by matrix and does not include any table indicating groupings of matrices on individual sealings. This

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<sup>359</sup> Although papyrologists and prosopographers may bemoan the loss of names, seal matrices are in fact just as helpful (if not more) to identify individuals. Indeed, while the pool of names tends to be small and reused regularly within families, seal designs are unique.

<sup>360</sup> For a presentation of the various sealing types and corresponding illustrations, see Appendix A.

<sup>361</sup> A word of caution concerning the limitations is necessary. A significant drawback of network analysis is that individuals involved solely in unilateral sealing practices, particularly in the case of receipts and private letters, are not represented since no relation (edge) can be determined. They must be addressed separately.

<sup>362</sup> I would like to thank Vito Messina of the University of Turin, one of the editors of the archive, for answering my question and providing images. A database was built in the early 1990s in preparation for the publication. Unfortunately efforts to secure funding to convert the antiquated format and transfer it to an online platform have so far been unsuccessful.

meant that a database had to be built manually by cross-referencing inventory numbers of sealings listed as instances for each corresponding matrix.<sup>363</sup> Finally, the large number of non-royal portraits precluded their inclusion as a whole in the database (table 9).

The present network analysis comprises over 450 nodes, representing as many individuals and offices (pl. 64). On the graph, matrices are color-coded to help distinguish patterns (red for royal portraits, blue for administrative stamps, grey for non-royal portraits, and white for miscellaneous devices). Furthermore, the size of the nodes corresponds to their centrality within the network. The bigger they are, the more connected these offices or persons were and the more central they were in the functioning of the archive. The network extending from administrative offices (blue dots) is curtailed to the first degree since the identification of their role within the archive is already well established through inscriptions on the matrices themselves. Their omnipresence in the dealings (they are responsible for half of the impressions) would otherwise create a lot of “white noise” in the graph. Likewise, ten black dots represent large groups of sealings that were excluded from the second degree. By virtue of their centrality, we can deduce that matrices connected directly to black dots are likely to represent administrative offices.

Let us first look at the ninety-five ruler portraits impressed on 246 sealings (table 10). 153 of these—or over 60%—present a single impression. They could come from a variety of documents such as tax receipts, registrations of a transaction by a notary, and oaths.<sup>364</sup> Ruler portraits that only appear once are unlikely to belong to officials working for the archive (table 11). This conclusion is supported by the fact that the only three ruler portraits inscribed with the title of an office were all found on multiple sealings (table 12, Se 1, 3, 7). Seventy-eight ruler portraits—or about 82%—are singletons (they are represented on the graph as small, scattered red dots in the periphery). We can conclude, as already suggested above in the study of Egyptian documents, that the local administration did not use the image of the ruler as a device for seals. This includes 38 of the 51 portraits identified as Seleukid rulers. Most of these were probably owned by individuals who used the royal image as their personal seal. Among these also figure the six matrices identified as “Alexander” by the editors (Al 1-6) whose frontal depictions of the conqueror are more akin to representations of divinities than ruler portraits.

A distinct cluster in the upper right corner of the graph, centered on matrix M 59, provides an excellent example of the information that can be gathered from such a network analysis (pl. 65). It sheds light on the persons who used a royal portrait as their seal device but were not members of the local administration. Although we do not know the exact nature of the office represented by M 59, it clearly was one of the busiest of the entire archive since the matrix produced 1422 impressions! The office or officer used the same device for nearly twenty years

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<sup>363</sup> Again, I am very grateful to Vito Messina who provided PDF files of the catalogues so that they could be searched more easily. The process still is extremely time-consuming and subject to human error both in the print catalogues and in the manual input of inventory numbers in the database.

<sup>364</sup> Given the official nature of the archive, it is unlikely that private letters, oracle letters, and other private reports, which are often sealed with a single sealing, figure among these.

between 199/8 and 180/79 B.C.<sup>365</sup> Four red dots around M 59 indicates that four individuals using a ruler portrait as the device on their seal visited or had dealings with this office in 182/1 and 180/79 B.C. These events are “preserved” in sealings S6-984, S6-6366, S6-6504, and S7-4319 (table 10). Interestingly, we learn that three of these individuals (pl. 65, Re 16–17, Se 37) were exempt from paying the salt tax (indeed, stamps Alk 83 and 85 read “exempt”). The exemption suggests the special, probably elite, status of the owners.<sup>366</sup>

Below on the graph, another cluster around two large nodes, TF 184 (female head) and AtT 44 (Athena head), tells an interesting story (pl. 66). It illustrates how a network analysis helps reconstruct some information contained in the lost documents. Let us look at the red dot, La 1 (diademed head), in its immediate periphery. The person using the royal profile as a seal device visited the archive of Seleukeia twice: once to deal with the offices represented by the two large nodes TF 184 and AtT 44 at an unknown date; the other time in 231/0 B.C. to be involved in the sale of a slave recorded by the “registrar’s office”, the *katagraphion* (Kat 12), and payment of the corresponding fee to the “slave tax office,” the *andrapodikē onē* (Adk 9; table 10, S9-333).<sup>367</sup> We are looking at a private individual, wealthy enough to be involved in the sale of a slave, and well connected enough to own a royal portrait as a seal.

Conversely, a handful of matrices with ruler portraits do represent seals used by the Seleukid administration. Among these feature Se 1 and 2, impressed respectively 49 and 36 times. Furthermore, Se 1 stands out as a particularly central node in the graph (pl. 67). It should come as no surprise since an inscription identifies the seal as that of the *chreophylakes* of Seleukeia (along with Se 3). The deified image of the *city founder* constitutes a fitting device for the important office.<sup>368</sup> Se 1 was kept in circulation for over a quarter of a century since it is associated with other administrative stamps dated from 240/39 to 213/2 B.C. Since Se 3 is only associated with a stamp dated 243/2 B.C., it is possible that Se 3 was an earlier version of the seal. Se 2 features the same horned portrait of Seleukos I and was probably used by the *chreophylakes* too. Two additional ruler portraits of exceptional quality, Se 32 and 47 (identified respectively as Seleukos IV and Demetrios II in Chapter 2), may represent the seal of important offices of the Seleukid administration (table 12). Unfortunately their exact function is unclear since they are not associated with any other matrices except for Se 32, which was once impressed with a stamp of the salt tax office (table 10, S-9678).

We need to turn our attention to non-royal portraits, represented as grey dots in the graph. Although the present network analysis does not include all such representations, the results are nonetheless enlightening and valid for reasons explained above. Statistics, such as the fact that 90% of such matrices are only known through a single impression (table 9), suggest that the

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<sup>365</sup> We know this because matrix M 59 appears in conjunction with dated stamps on several sealings.

<sup>366</sup> Regarding the salt tax and exemption, see Mollo 1996; Aperghis 2004, 154–6.

<sup>367</sup> For more concerning these offices at Seleukeia, see Mollo 1997.

<sup>368</sup> Although the *chreophylakes* are mentioned in numerous sources, we know relatively little concerning their specific duties. They were important members of the administration and impressed their seals on numerous documents. They may have been in charge of some financial duties (Leriche 1996; Mollo 1997, 93; Capdetrey 2007, 319–20).

majority of non-royal portraits were used by a variety of persons visiting the archival building at Seleukeia rather than by the local administration. The graph translates this distribution visually as a scattering of grey dots particularly obvious around the central node Se 1 (pl. 67). Those represent individuals who visited the office of the *chreophylakes* between 240/39 and 213/2 B.C. to record some transaction. The portraits, ranging from generic to particular and from male to female, did not constitute a device of choice. We can see quite clearly on the graph that private individuals preferred mythological and miscellaneous subjects, represented as white dots. Interestingly, a single private portrait bears any kind of inscription (pl. 68.1). On the left of the draped bust representing a young male with thick locks, we read ΔΙΟΦΑΝ[.]. The missing ending shrouds the name in mystery: we cannot know whether the man (Diophanes?) was the owner of the signet (in the genitive) or the engraver (in the nominative). Finally, a handful of non-royal portraits were probably used as the seal device of a functionary or office as indicated by the high number of impressions. The spectrum of quality and particularism of such depictions is again extremely broad. Among these figure a rather bland male head (pl. 65, TM 220) and another one, more detailed but poorly preserved, showing a youthful profile with a strong brow and curly hair (pl. 68.2).

### Constructing power

The evidence presented above shows that ruler portraits represented a very small minority of subjects for Hellenistic seals and that they were primarily not associated with the royal or local administration, contrarily to what has sometimes been suggested.<sup>369</sup> Further material and literary evidence helps to define a context within which the royal image was used as a key building block of a new social order centered on Hellenistic kingship.

The question whether Hellenistic rulers used their likeness as devices either on their personal and/or official seal(s) needs to be addressed. The idea seems perfectly logical to the modern mind. Heads of state, particularly monarchs, have often chosen to impress their own image on official documents from the time of the Holy Roman Emperors to the present.<sup>370</sup> Although we cannot categorically rule out the possibility that Hellenistic rulers ever made a similar choice, the extant evidence militates strongly against it.<sup>371</sup> We know from Roman sources that Alexander the Great had his portrait engraved by the gem carver Pyrgoteles and that the Roman emperor Augustus used for a time a portrait of the Macedonian conqueror as his own seal.<sup>372</sup> It would be tempting to associate the two otherwise unconnected anecdotes and deduce that Alexander's seal featured his portrait. Nevertheless, the device is never described by ancient sources, although several biographers mention a seal or seals, including in emotionally charged moments such as the king's death. Curtius alone suggests that Alexander used *two different* seals,

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<sup>369</sup> Rostovtzeff 1932, 53.

<sup>370</sup> The Great Seal of the Realm, symbolizing the monarch's approval of important state documents and redesigned in 2001 by a British sculptor James Butler, features a middle-aged Queen Elizabeth II seated on an invisible throne.

<sup>371</sup> Fleischer 1996, 324; Bencivenni 2014, 162–3.

<sup>372</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.10; Suet. *Aug.* 2.50.

an “old” (*vetus*) one and the seal of the defeated Persian king Darius, the latter probably directed at his Persian subjects.<sup>373</sup> The Latin adjective could be understood as describing an object with a long history such as an heirloom. If so, Alexander could have inherited it from his father and the device could not have been a portrait.<sup>374</sup> Either way, the exact nature of the design adorning the king’s ring remains unknown.<sup>375</sup>

Diadochs did not display a preference for portraits as seal devices. A lion may have adorned Lysimachos’ ring.<sup>376</sup> The Seleukids favored an anchor, as attested in sealings found at Seleukeia and Uruk.<sup>377</sup> The emblem appeared as early as the dynastic founder’s rule. Appian clearly identifies the device on Seleukos’ iron signet as an anchor, a symbol of particular significance to the ruler. According to other sources, it resembled the shape of a birthmark on his thigh (passed congenitally to all his descendants), and represented a symbol of his divine parentage (as a son of Apollo, a story paralleling Alexander’s) and a harbinger of his future rule over the East (it was prophesized that he would lose his seal where he would build his empire; the ring sank in the Euphrates).<sup>378</sup> Furthermore, evidence from Egypt shows that the Ptolemies also favored an emblem associated with the founder of their dynasty.<sup>379</sup> A papyrus in Leiden presenting a royal ordinance in response to a petition, mentioned earlier, preserves the seal impression of the issuing ruler Ptolemaios X Alexandros: a large, oblong bezel engraved with a an eagle in profile to left holding a thunderbolt, now barely visible (pl. 63.1). Just like the Seleukid anchor, the bird of prey was featured on Ptolemaic coins for centuries.

Although outside of our chronological period, it is worth noting that as late as the beginning of the Roman Principate a portrait was not the default seal device for a ruler. Augustus

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<sup>373</sup> Curt. 6.6.6. For a list of sources and doubts concerning Curtius’ version, see Hammond 1995. Although we do not know the device adorning Darius’s seal, it certainly represented a potent symbol of power in a Persian context. Alexander would have used it to stress continuity of rule, just as he adopted some elements of Persian regalia. For more concerning Alexander’s costume and further references, see Fredricksmeyer 2002; Collins 2012.

<sup>374</sup> Several ancient sources (Diod. Sic. 17.117.3; Curt. 10.5.4; 10.6.4, 16, among others) report that the dying Alexander removed his ring and gave it to Perdikkas, lending some support to the idea that royal seals were passed down from one ruler to the next.

<sup>375</sup> Following Curtius, Hans Baldus (1987) has argued that Alexander used two seals: a personal seal which, he hypothesizes, featured a striding lion and sword in the West, and the seal of Darius in the East.

<sup>376</sup> Baldus 1978.

<sup>377</sup> A clay tablet from Uruk impressed with a rectangular seal with a quadruped (lion, horse, or bull?) walking to right underneath a horizontal anchor bears a cuneiform inscription reading “a stamp seal, the seal of the king.” The device could be understood as the royal seal of Antiochos I (Wallenfels 1994, 9, no. 1; 2015, 7). A similar impression, possibly made with the same seal, was discovered in the archive at Seleukeia (Messina and Mollo 2004, 30, no. SU 2).

<sup>378</sup> App. *Syr.* 56; Just. *Epit.* 15.4.3–6. About Seleukos I’s use of the anchor, see Hadley 1974, 60–5. For the metaphorical significance of Appian’s passage, see Kosmin 2014, 97–9.

<sup>379</sup> On Ptolemaios’s appropriation of Zeus as a way to legitimate his succession to Alexander, see Ogden 2013, 186–9.

employed two successive seals before commissioning his own portrait from the foremost engraver of his time, Dioskourides.<sup>380</sup> The latter would then be used by his successors. He first used a pair of very similar seals engraved with a sphinx that he had inherited from his mother. Weary of quips concerning the inscrutability of his missives, he soon swapped the mythological animal for a portrait of his spiritual mentor, Alexander the Great. In sum, the evidence shows that rulers, like other seal users, tended to choose their device for its personal significance, a topic that will be discussed below.

It seems that the royal likeness was used by a small but diverse group of individuals in the ruler's sphere of influence from government officials to members of the king's entourage.<sup>381</sup> Let us first discuss the first of these broad categories since one would expect the royal administration to make use of the ruler's portrait to signify the legitimacy of its mandate. The use of signet rings as symbol of authority is indeed attested in ancient literary sources. Pliny says that during the Republican period ambassadors were given gold rings for the duration of their service abroad.<sup>382</sup> Sealings from the Hellenistic period indicate that the royal image was sometimes used by the administration. We have seen several examples from Seleukeia on the Tigris, including the horned portrait of Seleukos I used by the *chreophylakes* (Se 1, 3, 7) and two other fine portraits possibly employed by unknown officials (Se 32 and 47). Other examples come from Egyptian papyri. A military official named Amphikles sealed a papyrus discovered in Qarara ordering the payment of a soldier, with a seal displaying a diademed portrait head (table 5, no. 976). Although the sealing is now lost, it may have represented the Ptolemaic ruler of the time.

Recurring devices appearing at different locations show that the use of the royal image was carefully regulated and reserved for specific offices. The *chreophylakes* of the cities of Seleukeia and Uruk, about 200 miles apart, secured their documents with seals of an astoundingly similar iconography and format (pl. 69.1–2). The horned profile of Seleukos I on a square bezel, found in both archives, was clearly engraved from the same model, if not by the same hand, although small details and the letters of the inscription distinguish them. The royal chancellery must have controlled the iconographical repertoire used by the local administration and possibly even centralized the production of official seals. The hypothesis is further supported by the presence in both archives of impressions from similar matrices depicting a tall tripod made by the cities' respective *bibliophylakes* (pl. 69.3–4). A single seal cannot be responsible for both impressions since they differ slightly. Furthermore, inscribed versions discovered at Seleukeia indicate that the office was local.<sup>383</sup>

Although the royal image could be used by the administration, we should not be too hasty in attributing such a function to all engraved ruler portraits. Sealing archives show that the administration had neither a particular monopoly nor a marked preference for such devices. At Seleukeia, only a handful of matrices with ruler portraits can be securely associated with the administration (Se 1–3, 7, and possibly Se 32, 47), representing a paltry 136 impressions as opposed to the 15,069 impressions made with the inscribed stamps used by several tax offices

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<sup>380</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.8, 10; Suet. *Aug.* 50. Instinsky 1962.

<sup>381</sup> Vollenweider 1958, 31–2; Salzmann 1984, 160–2; Gerring 2000, 123–6.

<sup>382</sup> Plin. *HN* 33.4.

<sup>383</sup> Messina and Mollo 2004, no. SU 22.



and the *katagraphion*! Even among the figurative matrices used by the administration (as indicated by inscriptions), portraits represent a small minority. Compare the 136 impressions made with Seleukid portraits to the 291 impressions made with 24 matrices presenting various Seleukid symbols such as the anchor or the horned horse.<sup>384</sup> A similar distribution of devices is found in the sealing archive discovered at Uruk. There, administrative seals feature a variety of Seleukid symbols such as a tripod and an anchor, or divinities associated with their rule such as Apollo, Nike, and Athena, and only a few portraits, particularly that of the deified image of the dynasty founder.<sup>385</sup> Furthermore, the evidence from Egypt indicates it is not until the Roman period that a ruler portrait appeared on the red stamps used by the office of the *strategos*, the official in charge of a nome in Egypt since the late second century B.C.<sup>386</sup>

An oracular letter from the Fayum sealed with a diademed head to right represents the only testimony regarding the use of engraved ruler portraits by temple officials (table 5, no. 1008). The sanctuary was dedicated to the Egyptian gods Soknopaios and Isis and shows no sign of having been connected to the ruler cult. Yet it is difficult to ascertain the relation of the religious official with the Ptolemies and their administration. Temples often played an important role in the management of land and in Egyptian bureaucracy more generally. Furthermore, the Macedonian dynasty played an essential role in the reclamation, resettlement, and development of the Fayum.<sup>387</sup>

In fact, literary and material evidence suggests that the administration was not the principal user/recipient of engraved ruler portraits. A broader audience constituted of *philo*i, friends, and allies received them as gifts, honorific tokens, and even tests of allegiance.<sup>388</sup> Plutarch tells us that the Roman ambassador Lucullus, who had been sent to Egypt to negotiate naval assistance, received as a parting gift from Ptolemaios IX an expensive gold ring with an engraved emerald bezel.<sup>389</sup> In typical austere Republican fashion, Lucullus first refused the costly present. Fearful of committing an irreparable—and possibly fatal—diplomatic faux pas, he finally conceded once he learned that the ring bore a royal likeness. The custom of wearing a portrait as a sign of allegiance is well documented throughout the Hellenistic period. Supporters of the Sicilian tyrant Agathokles and the Pontic king Mithridates IV wore portrait rings to curry favor and display publicly their devotion to the ruler.<sup>390</sup> The custom continued in the early Imperial period. According to Pliny, individuals accepted within the presence of the emperor

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<sup>384</sup> Messina and Mollo 2004, no. SU 1-24.

<sup>385</sup> Lindström 2003, 27–48.

<sup>386</sup> During the Hellenistic period, the stamps only featured a regnal year and name of the king. By the end of the first century A.D., they sometimes showed a bust of the Roman emperor (Vandorpe 1996, 254–6, 282–4).

<sup>387</sup> Manning 2003.

<sup>388</sup> Völcker-Janssen 1993, 155–64. For discussions of the role of *philo*i and organization of Hellenistic courts, see Weber 1997; Savalli-Lestrade 1998; Virgilio 2003, 131–91.

<sup>389</sup> Plut. *Vit. Luc.* 3.1.

<sup>390</sup> Polyb. 15.31.9; Ath. 5.212d–e.

Claudius were given his likeness engraved on a gold ring.<sup>391</sup> Wearing the portrait of an unpopular figure at the wrong time or place could even have dire consequences.<sup>392</sup>

A recently published clay tablet from Seleukid Uruk, now in the collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery, University of Regina, Saskatchewan, provides further evidence concerning the elite identity of private individuals using ruler portraits as devices on their personal seals.<sup>393</sup> The document records the sale of a plot of urban real estate in a temple district in 163 B.C. Two portraits of a Greek type, one of them diademed, are impressed on the right edge of the tablet (pl. 70). Inscriptions identify the owners of the seals as the sellers of the parcel: Diophantos and Demokrates, the sons of Kephalon. Diophantos' seal was engraved with a portrait of Antiochos IV, while Demokrates' depicted a male head with closely cropped hair (or bald). Information concerning the social status of the brothers can be gathered from the rich documentation preserved in tablets from Uruk. The father, Kephalon, appears in numerous documents dated between 210 and 188 B.C. as the chief administrator of Uruk (*rab ša rēš āli ša Uruk*), a title that seems to have been hereditary since both his father and one of his sons, Diophantos, also assumed the same administrative function. Kephalon's father and brother also served as administrators of the city's temples. Clearly, the family enjoyed a special elite status in Uruk. The presence of a royal portrait on Diophantos' seal could be understood as an official device inherited with the function of administrator. Yet Diophantos no longer held an administrative office by the time he impressed his seal on the tablet. Thus, he was using a portrait of the late king (who had died only a few months before) outside of any official function.

Hellenistic rulers used the ancestral tradition of gift giving and gift friendship of Mediterranean cultures to foster social links and attachment to their person. The gift of an engraved portrait manifests a demand of recognition of and commitment to the royal authority. It also adds a literal dimension to Marcel Mauss's definition of the gift as a "present of some part of oneself."<sup>394</sup> The charged gesture requires the recipient to accept the royal likeness as a kind of corporeal graft. Furthermore, in shifting the dynamic of gift exchange between equals to between ruler and subject, the new schema subverts the traditional paradigm. The response can neither be deferred nor comparable.<sup>395</sup> Rather reciprocity must be immediate and intangible in this particular exchange. In accepting and more importantly using the gift as a seal, the receiver reciprocates by subordinating their own agency—at least symbolically—to that of the ruler, and repeats the ritual every time the device presses into the hot wax or soft clay of a sealing.

The significance of seals in ancient culture and thought only enhances the power dynamics at play in the diffusion of engraved royal portraits as gifts. In the *Orphic Hymns*, Apollo's seal embodies the god's creative power to fashion the world.<sup>396</sup> In another hymn, the

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<sup>391</sup> Plin. *HN* 33.41. Pliny (*HN* 33.23) also associates the new preference for gold instead of stone bezels with the reign of Claudius.

<sup>392</sup> For Roman sources and anecdotes, see Lapatin 2015, 114–5.

<sup>393</sup> Wallenfels 2015.

<sup>394</sup> Mauss 1924, 49, 178. "Présenter quelque chose à quelqu'un c'est présenter quelque chose de soi."

<sup>395</sup> Bourdieu 1972, 5.

<sup>396</sup> *Hymn. Orph.* 34.26. "Wherefore you form and bear the seal of the entire cosmos."

Law (*Nomos*) is called “the seal of the world.”<sup>397</sup> Furthermore, Alexander the Great’s interactions with seals illustrate their close association with power. The transfer of seals as symbols of imperial authority appears in two crucial episodes of the king’s life. First, according to Curtius, Alexander adopted Darius’s signet ring along with several other insignias of Achaemenid rule such as the diadem.<sup>398</sup> Second, upon his deathbed, Alexander removed his ring and gave it to Perdikkas.<sup>399</sup> The next day, Perdikkas placed the seal on the throne as a symbol of the departed ruler.<sup>400</sup> Together, these ancient testimonies demonstrate a mutually strengthening relation between seals and power. Seals are both mediators and symbols of agency. The phenomenon appears all the more significant that agency constituted a key component of Hellenistic kingship and a central locus of its pretensions to divinity.<sup>401</sup>

Hellenistic rulers purposefully used the mutually bolstering relation of image and power to their advantage. Louis Marin has described the phenomenon most eloquently in his study of eighteenth-century absolute monarchy:

The king is only truly king, that is monarch, in images. They are his *real presence*: a belief in the effectiveness and agency of *his* iconic signs is necessary, otherwise the monarch is emptied of all his substance through lack of transubstantiation and only a simulacrum is left; but, conversely, because *his* signs *are* the royal *reality*—the being and substance of the prince—this belief is required by the signs themselves. . . .<sup>402</sup>

The Hellenistic king occupied the field of vision of his subjects: his statues stood in the streets as monuments to his generosity and victories and next to those of divinities in temples as signs of his complex identity and superhuman power. Even more intrusively, his portrait crept into

<sup>397</sup> *Hymn. Orph.* 64.1–3.

<sup>398</sup> Curtius (6.6.6) describes a geographically divided sealing practice: Alexander would have used his former seal for his European correspondence and the signet of Darius for Asian affairs. Some scholars doubt the veracity of this account (*supra* n. 373). The historical truth is somewhat irrelevant for our purpose. More importantly, the anecdote shows that seals were powerful symbols of monarchic rule in ancient thought.

<sup>399</sup> Diod. Sic. 17.117.3; 18.2.4; Just. *Epit.* 12.15.12; Curt. 10.5.4; 10.6.5, 16.

<sup>400</sup> Curt. 10.6.4.

<sup>401</sup> Concerning the nature of Hellenistic kingship, see Bilde et al. 1996; Virgilio 2003; Savalli-Lestrade and Cogitore 2010. A ruler’s power to protect or punish is most clearly associated with the Greek belief in the visibility of divine power (*epiphaneia*) in the hymn sung at Athens upon the return of Demetrios in 291 B.C. (Chaniotis 2003). It is this superhuman agency that is exalted in civic ruler cult. Bagio Virgilio (2010) has also highlighted the importance of royal correspondence in the construction of power.

<sup>402</sup> Marin 1981, 12–3. Author’s translation. “Le roi n’est vraiment roi, c’est-à-dire monarque, que dans des images. Elles sont sa *présence réelle* : une croyance dans l’efficacité et l’opérativité de ses signes iconiques est obligatoire, sinon le monarque se vide de toute sa substance par défaut de transubstantiation et il n’en reste plus que le simulacre; mais, à l’inverse, parce que ses signes *sont* la *réalité* royale, l’être et la substance du prince, cette croyance est nécessairement exigée par les signes eux-mêmes. . . .”

pockets (struck on coins) and slipped onto fingers (engraved on rings). The particular efficacy of “medal-money,” a medium that Marin identifies as a special locus of power construction, could in some way apply to the seal.<sup>403</sup> In both cases, the user recognizes the authority of the ruler. And unlike statues and paintings, numismatic and glyptic portraits were eminently mobile and entered into complex social and economic networks.<sup>404</sup>

It is perhaps in the singular iconicity of power that we can find an explanation for the apparent refusal of Hellenistic rulers to use their own image as a device for their seals, as opposed to its other uses detailed above. By relinquishing the monopoly on his portrait as a personal symbol of his agency, the ruler constructs *power at second hand*. To better understand the process, we need to turn to the concept of power in ancient thought. The Greeks did not have a single, all-encompassing word for “power.” Rather they distinguished several varieties of “power over” such as *archē* (command or office) and *hēgemonia* (leadership or rule) from a single “power to,” *dynamis*, which relates etymologically to the verb “I can; I am able to.”<sup>405</sup> The latter connotes ideas of ability and might. Or as Marin defines it:

Power is, first, to have the ability to exert an action on something or someone, not to act or to do but to have the potential of doing so, to *have* the force to do or to act. Power, in the most vulgar and general sense, is to be capable of force, to have—and I must insist on this property—a reserve of force that is not expended but that is in a *state* of being expendable.<sup>406</sup>

The power that is constructed through the distribution of engraved ruler portraits is of a particular kind. It seems to combine “power over” and “power to.” The agentive potentiality (*dynamis*) of the king is asserted through the legal function of seals and *enacted* during the sealing process. But most importantly, the rule (*archē/hēgemonia*) of the sovereign is *acknowledged* by others through their use of seals bearing the royal image. We stand before an extreme case of power, the “hyper-agency” of the ruler, which does not find its greatest expression in direct affirmation, through force, but rather in its suspension and dissemination

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<sup>403</sup> Marin 1981, 154. “La médaille, une représentation-pouvoir, en ce sens primitive que, portant *dans* sa matière (et non *à sa surface* comme les couches de peinture ou les traces d’encre), par empreinte, gravure et inscription, la marque d’une autorité souveraine et indiquant par là même la présence légitime de cette autorité, autorisant cette autorité, la médaille-monnaie se fonde et s’autorise elle-même: elle est en elle-même vérité et loi.”

<sup>404</sup> Stewart (1993, 160–1) highlights the function of money in constructing and maintaining Alexander’s power. Coinage participated in the circulation of his fame, just as encomium and poetry did.

<sup>405</sup> For a discussion of these concepts and their deployment in portraits of Alexander, see Stewart 1993, 61–2.

<sup>406</sup> Marin 1981, 11. Author’s translation. “Pouvoir, c’est d’abord être en état d’exercer une action sur quelque chose ou quelqu’un; non pas agir ou faire, mais en avoir la puissance, *avoir* cette force de faire ou d’agir. Pouvoir, dans le sens le plus vulgaire et le plus général, c’est être capable de force, avoir—et il faut insister sur cette propriété—une réserve de force qui ne se dépense pas mais met en *état* de se dépenser.”

through signs such as his likeness.<sup>407</sup> The power of the ruler co-opts and subjugates the agency of others with their acquiescence through the repeated use of his engraved image.

### **Enacting agency**

The dialog between agency and engraved portraiture extends beyond the discourse concerning the “hyper-agency” of the king. Non-royal portraits on seals also assert the personal agency of individuals. A seal becomes a surrogate for a person and increases the reach of their agency beyond somatic boundaries and physical location. It enables private agency within the confines of specific socio-economic contexts codified and acknowledged by society, such as epistolary correspondence and contract law.

The choice of private seal devices spans the full spectrum of Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotic theory: they can relate to the individual as icons, indices, or symbols. The iconic relation between a seal and its user is most evident in the case of a person using a seal bearing their own likeness. Hundred of unidentifiable portraits have been discovered in sealing archives, although the phenomenon cannot be quantified or studied in detail since the association between the impression and the individual is now lost along with the signature of the seal user. Nevertheless, the particularism permeating some engraved portraits leaves little doubt as to some level of physical connection between the representation and the person. Two sealings discovered at Seleukeia on the Tigris and impressed with the same engraved gem probably mounted on a ring provides an excellent illustration (pl. 68.3–4). The skilled carver captured the stern profile of a man with close-cropped hair, wrinkled forehead, straight nose, and pressed fleshy lips above a thick, draped neck.<sup>408</sup> It is worth noting that such particularism is rarely found in female engraved portraits, as in the case of statues from the same period.<sup>409</sup> The impression on a sealing still attached to its papyrus, found in the Fayum, represents one of the few instances where a portrait can probably be identified as the sender of the letter, a high-ranking official named Lysimachos (pl. 70.2). The profile of the man features a sharp, long nose and beard low under the chin, while a striking, cauliflower ear juts out on a background of neat, short curls. The peculiar cropping of facial hair corresponds to a style favored by second-century B.C. and later Ptolemaic rulers.<sup>410</sup> Since the document is dated 181 B.C., it is unlikely that the seal was a family heirloom and depicted a portrait of Lysimachos’ ancestor.

Seals were also chosen for their personal, often indexical, significance to the user. We have previously seen that rulers selected potent signs associated physically or historically with dynastic founders such as the eagle for the Ptolemies or the anchor for the Seleukids. For private individuals, the device of a seal could refer to elements related to the personality, personal beliefs, origins, or even name of the person. The author Athenaios writes that a flatterer in the

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<sup>407</sup> Marin 1981, 12.

<sup>408</sup> Other examples include Messina and Mollo 2004, nos. TM 53, 57, 58, 79, 94, 97, 111, 120, 191, 199, 256, 263, 269, 270, 287, 399, 438, 463, 464, 472, 477, 481, 484–486.

<sup>409</sup> Messina and Mollo 2004, nos. TF 19, TF 185; Dillon 2010, 103–34.

<sup>410</sup> Kyrieleis 1975, pls. 46, 54–5, 58, 62, 64–5; 2015.

court of Ptolemaios III named Kallikrates not only chose Odysseus as a device for his signet ring but also named his children after family members of the Greek hero as a sign of his cleverness.<sup>411</sup> Furthermore, Elaphion, the Syrian woman involved in guardianship contracts discovered at Elephantine, possessed a seal representing a female head with an elegant melon hairdo (pl. 62.27). Even though we cannot know if she would have considered it a portrait, the device appears appropriate for a woman who probably was a courtesan.<sup>412</sup> The generic, female head impressed on a sealing from an Elephantine marriage contract may have belonged to the bride since the placement on the first sealing was often reserved for the contracting parties (pl. 62.2). While the devices could refer to gender or social status, it could also hint at the cultural background of the seal users. Two Egyptians, a woman named Haynchis and a man named Petosiris, sealed documents discovered in Egypt, respectively a tax receipt and an order of payment, with Egyptian devices: the Egyptian symbol for life; and a mummified figure with a cartouche and the goddess Maat (table 5, nos. 920–921, 934).

Most often, though, the personal significance of the device—however arbitrary it may have been—is lost to time.<sup>413</sup> Nevertheless, a signet always represented a *symbol* in the Piercean meaning of the term, that is a sign associated with the seal owner by convention. For instance, Augustus’ entourage and associates learned to recognize in turn a sphinx, a portrait of Alexander, and finally a portrait of the princeps himself as his mark. Furthermore, seals appear as *symbola*, tokens given to guests and family for recognition, in Greek literature.<sup>414</sup> Euripides employed such a plot device in his play *Auge*, now only known through fragments.<sup>415</sup> The best-known instance of a recognition scene involving a signet appears in Sophokles’ *Elektra* during the emotional reunion of the heroine with her brother:

Elektra: Then are you he?

Orestes: Look at this seal that was my father’s, and learn whether I speak the truth!<sup>416</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Ath. 251d.

<sup>412</sup> In the two contracts involving Elaphion, chronologically *P. Eleph.* 4 and 3 (table 7), the Syrian woman changes “guardian” twice, first from Dios to Pantarkes and then from Pantarkes to Antipatros, within sixteen months and receives financial compensation both times. Although the terms of the contracts are a vague, it does not seem improbable that the documents regulated some form of concubinage.

<sup>413</sup> Plantzos (999, 24) posits that the use of a Thutmosis seal by a Greek (*P. Eleph.* 5) “is a further indication for the loose significance usually attached to those objects and intrinsic connotations.” I find this judgment hasty since any such connections may represent irretrievable biographical ephemera.

<sup>414</sup> Eur. *Med.* 610–5. “But if you wish to get some of my money to help the children and yourself in exile, say the word, for I am ready to give with unstinting hand, and also to send tokens to my friends, who will treat you well.” Moreno 2008.

<sup>415</sup> Eur. *Auge Fragments* 265–81.

<sup>416</sup> Soph. *El.* 1222–3. Loeb translation.

ἦ γὰρ σὺ κεῖνος;  
τήνδε προσβλέψασά μου  
σφραγίδα πατρὸς ἔκμαθ’ εἰ σαφῆ λέγω.

The seal is both a guarantor of identity and truth. Although *anagnorisis* scenes are most common in epic and tragic works, the object also appears in Aristophanes' *Birds* as a gate-pass and in Plutarch's *Parallela Minora* and *Artaxerxes* as a token of recognition or friendship.<sup>417</sup>

Ancient sources abound with anecdotes suggesting that one's life was closely related to the fate of one's seal. More specifically, the loss of a seal often foreshadows loss of agency. It represents ultimately a metonymy for death. For instance, Julius Caesar was given Pompey's signet ring along with the head of his enemy.<sup>418</sup> On his deathbed, the emperor Tiberius took his signet ring off his finger, contemplated it for a while, and then put it back on. He was to die soon after.<sup>419</sup> Hadrian's loss of his seal engraved with his portrait, which "slipped from his finger of its own accord," was also understood as a premonition of his demise.<sup>420</sup> Seals, as important symbols of agency and even substitutes of their owner, could either "die" with their owners, by being placed in their tomb or on their pyre, or could be passed on to descendants.<sup>421</sup>

Seals functioned as markers and mediators of social relations and networks. They could create or signify friendships, political alliances, and intellectual sympathies.<sup>422</sup> Ovid writes that his friends wore his portrait on gold rings and interacted nostalgically with his image during his exile.<sup>423</sup> Other authors such as Pausanias and Martial mention the gift of seal rings as signs of friendship.<sup>424</sup> Cicero reports that the disciples of the Epicurean School carried the likeness of the founder on their drinking cups and rings.<sup>425</sup> The practice seems to have been widespread in light of the popularity of philosophers and orators' portraits as devices on Greek and Roman gems.<sup>426</sup> As shown in the previous chapter, lovers could also exchange engraved portraits.

Seals also "stood in" for their owners in social settings and abducted their agency. Plutarch tells us that seals could serve to draw lots. Needing to decide the order of battle, the Greek general Timoleon asked the cavalry officers their signet rings, put them in a cloak, and let chance decide who would go first.<sup>427</sup> Legally, seals could serve as evidence and "witnesses" in court. The trial of Catiline featured several seals, some with engraved portraits, presented as evidence of guilt.<sup>428</sup> In this instance, it is particularly telling that the contents of incriminating letters were not deemed to be sufficient evidence. The seals had to be identified by different witnesses. Similar scenes appear in judicial accounts by Demosthenes and Cicero.<sup>429</sup>

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On the translation of *sphragis* in this instance, see Kenna 1961.

<sup>417</sup> Ar. *Av.* 1213; Plut. *Parallela minora* 19; Plut. *Vit. Artax.* 18.1.

<sup>418</sup> Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 80.5.

<sup>419</sup> Suet. *Tib.* 73.

<sup>420</sup> SHA *Hadr.* 26.6–7.

<sup>421</sup> Prop. 4.7; Cic. *Cat.* 10.

<sup>422</sup> Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, 16–7.

<sup>423</sup> Ov. *Tr.* 1.7.1–10.

<sup>424</sup> Paus. 30.4; Mart. 14.122.

<sup>425</sup> Cic. *Fin.* 5.3.

<sup>426</sup> Lang 2012.

<sup>427</sup> Plut. *Vit. Tim.* 31.3.

<sup>428</sup> Cic. *Cat.* 10, 17.

<sup>429</sup> Dem. 33.36; Cic. *Flac.* 37.

Furthermore, in Menander's *Epitrepontes*, a ring with an engraved stone bezel is used to arbitrate in a paternity case.<sup>430</sup> Just as the rapist left his semen behind, evidenced in the birth of a child, so had he lost his seal at the scene of the crime.

We have seen that seals *re-presented* a person and their agency, i.e., made it present and tangible in their absence. But they were more than signs in the Peircean sense (an element determined by something else). They *constructed agency*. By this, I do not simply mean that seals had the potential to materialize an action taken at a specific moment and time through the process of impression. Rather I posit that the ritual of sealing participated in the construction of the person as an agent. To understand the distinction better, we need to address the concept of character (*ēthos*) building in Hellenistic thought, particularly through the work of Aristotle. In *Rhetoric*, the philosopher describes three modes of appealing to an audience: *ēthos* (character), *pathos* (emotion), and *logos* (reason).<sup>431</sup> The first corresponds to the authority that a speaker emanates. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explains that virtues of character (*ēthos*) cannot be taught (as opposed to intellectual virtues) but rather must be acquired *by doing*. He describes a process of habituation:

The virtues on the other hand we acquire by first having actually practiced them, just as we do the arts. We learn an art or craft by doing the things that we shall have to do when we have learnt it: for instance, men become builders by building houses, harpers by playing on the harp. Similarly we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.<sup>432</sup>

This processual and active conception of authority building can explain how the ritual of sealing enacted and participated in the construction of agency. One becomes an agent by doing agentive acts.

I have proposed earlier that the use of ruler portraits as seals by agents other than the king participated in the construction of royal power. Conversely, the use of a private portrait as a personal seal would have represented an effective and bold way to affirm one's own agency. There is no doubt that impressions of private portraits would have stood out among sealed records. Indeed, the distribution of impressions by subject in sealing archives shows that private portraits only account for a small fraction of the corpus, 8% at Seleukeia and 3% at Delos (table 9). Although they are more common than royal portraits, they still represent a drop in the sea of religious, mythological, and miscellaneous devices. The choice of a private portrait would have been a particularly powerful statement in the context of traditional practices in Greek cities. In fact, the right to set up a private portrait in a public space was carefully regulated. Until the fourth century B.C., it was an honor granted solely by the civic body to its greatest benefactors and in some cases to victorious athletes.<sup>433</sup> Later, family members, friends, and followers commissioned private votives and monuments to commemorate the life and achievements of a deceased individual. These honorific portraits were so valued that the fourth-century B.C. orator

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<sup>430</sup> Men. *Epit.* 388–90, 453–7.

<sup>431</sup> Arist. *Rh.* 1.2.3.

<sup>432</sup> Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 2.1.4–5. Loeb translation.

<sup>433</sup> For a general overview, see Ma 2013a; 2003b. For the case of Athens, see Stewart 1979, 115–32.



Demosthenes wrote that they “made life worth living.”<sup>434</sup> In such a context, the audacity of choosing one’s own portrait to impress legal documents recorded and preserved in public archives would hardly have been lost on the ancient viewer.

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<sup>434</sup> Dem. 23.136. “Kotys expected to rob Iphikrates of honors, of maintenance, of statues, of the country that made him a man to be envied, I may almost say of everything that made life worth living; yet he had no scruple.” Demosthenes would himself be granted a full-length portrait set up in the Athenian Agora after his death (pl. 25). For a summary of the evidence regarding the bronze statue, see Richter and Smith 1984, 108–13.

## CHAPTER 6

### Conclusion

May you send forth and sound out from your holy shrine  
such an immortal voice, O Lord, even for me,  
so that the Macedonians may honor me, both the [islanders]  
and the neighbors of all the Asiatic shore.  
Pellaeans are my family. May I find myself unrolling a book,  
standing all at once in the crowded market-place.  
For the Parian nightingale grant [...] a mournful  
thread, with empty tears streaming down the eyelids,  
and groaning, while through my friendly mouth [... ..]  
and let no one shed a tear. But in old age  
may I travel the mystic path to Rhadamanthys,  
longed for by my people and all the community,  
on my feet without a stick, sure of speech among the crowd,  
and leaving to my children my house and my wealth.<sup>435</sup>

In his so-called “Seal,” Poseidippos beseeches the god Apollo to grant his last request that he may receive the honor of a portrait from his Macedonian hometown.<sup>436</sup> The immortality of his words is not enough; the poet wants his image to remain in the physical world, possibly like that of his mentor Philetas “as if alive, although an old man of bronze.”<sup>437</sup> The reader is struck by the specificity of the plea: Poseidippos wants to be represented as a poet, “unrolling a scroll,” in the agora of Pella. The portrait is defined through three criteria: physical referentiality (“find myself”), social status (“unrolling a scroll”), and *context* (“in the crowded market-place”).

It is precisely the last aspect that is often missing from most definitions of Hellenistic portraiture. Othmar Jaeggi’s definition, quoted in the introduction, reflects the difficulties of the material the scholar was addressing, i.e. the collection of unprovenanced and unidentified Greek portraits from the Count de Lagunillas, now in the National Museum of Fine Arts of Havana, Cuba. The definition works well for a group of portraits in the round divorced from their original context through the vagaries of collecting history. The anonymity of the faces brought into sharp focus the semantic dimension of Greek portraiture. However, the relative homogeneity of the material and lack of provenience has obscured the crucial significance of context.

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<sup>435</sup> Lloyd-Jones and Parsons 1983, no. 705, lines 12–25. Translation from Austin and Bastianini 2002.

<sup>436</sup> A seal, or *sphragis* poem, is a literary motif placed at the beginning or end of a collection, which identifies the author. First mentioned in Theognis (19–23), the device became particularly popular in Hellenistic and Roman literature. Kathryn Gutzwiller (2005a, 317–9) has hypothesized that the “Seal” of Poseidippos may have concluded the newly-rediscovered collection of epigrams.

<sup>437</sup> Poseidippos, *Andriantopoiika* 63, line 8.

The definition proposed by Jaeggi could be amended thusly, “A Greek portrait is a representation of the human figure, which conveys a statement regarding the person or a political message, is characterized by its accuracy and differentiation, *and is informed by a specific context.*” We otherwise miss an essential dimension of Greek portraiture and a critical hermeneutic tool. Indeed, the traditional corpus of studied portraits focuses our attention on public contexts to the detriment of more intimate settings. This bias results in an inductive skewing of our understanding of Hellenistic portraits. Consequently, any material that does not fit with the mainstream material is considered aberrant and undeserving of scholarly attention. For this reason, “anonymous” portraits were deemed less relevant and even problematic until the 1990s. Since then, however, many scholars have shown the benefits of pushing the methodological limits of the field. Underappreciated media, particularly those considered “minor arts,” now constitute the new frontier.

Portraits engraved on gems and impressed on sealings provide an excellent entry point to build upon the nuancing work that has been carried out over the past decades. The present study sheds new light on Hellenistic portraiture precisely because glyptic images prompt us to ask different questions. It offers a better understanding of the flexible nature of ruler portraiture depending on context and presents new guidelines for identification using numismatic comparanda. It also highlights a zone of tension in the Greek portrait, i.e., the significance of the head as it relates to the person. Finally, it demonstrates the ways in which portraiture is both a visual *and* a social practice. While the body may not be represented pictorially on most gems, its social function was very much performed in the rituals surrounding the use of glyptic portraits as items of personal adornment and seals.

If the marvels of miniaturization examined in these pages have sparked Aristotelian wonderment in the modern viewer, then we may yet understand what portraits signified to the ancients.

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## APPENDIX A

### Sealings and Archives

#### Terminology

The vocabulary of sigillography is complex but essential to understand the kind of information that can be gathered from the study of ancient seals. Four important terms are used throughout the present study:

*Seal*: artifact bearing a unique design (known as device), usually carved in the negative in some hard material such as stone or metal, and used to impress and secure documents, goods, and rooms.

*Sealing*: lump of malleable and quick-setting material (usually clay and more rarely bitumen, lead, or wax) bearing one or more impressions made with a seal, object, or fingertips.

*Impression*: imprint, usually in the positive, left by a seal device, object, or fingertips into some impressible material.

*Matrix*: unique design of a seal identified through its impression alone. While a seal is a tangible object, a matrix is a conceptualized artifact that is no longer extant. Total loss or destruction apart, other reasons for this distinction include the possible re-cutting of a seal or its refurbishing. In such a scenario, we would perceive variations among impressions (and thus identify different matrices) that were actually made with the same seal at different stages of its life cycle.

It is essential to make those distinctions because the same document can be sealed with one or more sealings, and each sealing can be impressed once or many times with one or many seals (pl. 71).

#### Sealing practices

Sealings served as “locking” mechanisms for documents and containers such as purses, jars, storerooms, etc. The specimens found in Hellenistic archives secured documents, mostly written on papyri. Differences in shape and placement distinguish four main types.<sup>438</sup>

- (1) The first encircles the roll like a napkin ring (pl. 72). It is sometimes called “bulla” or “envelope” because of its visual association with Sumerian and later Near Eastern impressed support.
- (2) The second type, shaped like a pellet, secures the cord or string wound around the document (pl. 73). Such sealings are easily recognizable by the hole running through their long axis, where the disintegrated cord left a void, and the fibrous pattern of the papyrus or parchment imprinted on the back. The type is sometimes called “convex

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<sup>438</sup> Concerning sealing shapes and names, see Lindström 2003, 7–11; Herbert 2013, 210–1; Messina 2014, 126–7.

- appended sealing,” “pinched sealing,” and “Tonplombe” in German. The term “medallion” seems more fitting and avoids any confusion with the next type.
- (3) The “triangular sealing” or “container appended sealing” is molded around the loose ends of the string and is not affixed to the document itself (pl. 74.1). It does not present any markings on its back and is sometimes triangular in shape.
  - (4) The existence of a fourth type, sometimes called “saddle” or “convex” sealing, is debated. This type is smooth and convex, and may have been placed within the rolled document (pl. 74.2).

## Hellenistic archives

Numerous hoards of sealings have been found around the Mediterranean and in the Near East.<sup>439</sup> The documents that they secured were usually destroyed in the event that preserved the sealings themselves (typically baked by a fire). The papyri found on the island of Elephantine in Egypt represent a notable exception since their sealings were still attached to the closing system upon discovery. The following list presents archives, both public and private, that date from or overlap with the Hellenistic period, and contain portraits. Unfortunately a large portion remains unpublished.

### *Artaxata, Armenia*

In a room by the citadel’s gate on hill V and in a small room on hill VIII; after 180 B.C. – A.D. 59

Two archives containing over 8,000 clay sealings, a quarter of which are unreadable, were excavated between 1978 and 1980. Among the 1035 different matrices figure 55 portraits, including some late Ptolemies, eastern rulers, and Romans. Most are unpublished.

Bibliography: Khachatrian 1996; Manoukian 1996; Neverov 1996.

### *Carthage, Tunisia*

Temple of Baal and Tinit on the akropolis; late 6<sup>th</sup> century–146 B.C.

The German Archaeological Institute excavated over 4,000 clay sealings in the archive of the Baal and Tinit Temple between 1989 and 1993. A small number of matrices show generic female and male heads.

Bibliography: Rakob 1991; Berges 1993; 1996; 1997.

### *Delos, Greece*

Private house, “Maison des sceaux,” in Skardhana quarter (GD 59D); 170–69 B.C.

About 16,000 sealings were discovered in 1974, 1975, and 1987 in the rubble of a collapsed house. Several hundred portraits, mainly of private individuals and a few dozen Ptolemaic and Seleukid rulers, were found. Many remain unpublished.

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<sup>439</sup> For lists of archives, see Boussac and Invernizzi 1996; Berges 1997, 33–8; Plantzos 1999, 22–32.

Bibliography: Boussac 1980; 1982; Queyrel 1984; Boussac 1988; 1992; Stampolides 1992; Boussac 1993a; 1993b; Auda and Boussac 1996; Hatzi-Vallianou 1996; Stampolides 1996; Boussac 1997.

#### *Edfu, Egypt*

Allegedly found in a large clay pot; early 2<sup>nd</sup> century—soon after 30 B.C.

A hoard of 647 clay sealings allegedly was found in a large clay pot from Edfu in the winter of 1905/6. Half of the assemblage was purchased by the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, and the other half eventually was donated to the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam. The latter remains mostly unpublished. About half of the impressions show portraits, mainly Ptolemaic.

Bibliography: Milne 1916; Plantzos 1996b.

#### *Elephantine, Egypt*

Found in a pot in a house; 311–222 B.C.

In 1906, 32 clay impressions were found still attached to their papyri on the island of Elephantine. Among these were a few, rather generic, heads.

Bibliography: Rubensohn 1907; Plantzos 1999, 24–27.

#### *Kallion/Kallipolis, Aetolia*

Private house, possibly belonging to *stratego*i of the Aetolian Confederacy; 279–168 B.C.

This private archive of about 600 clay and lead sealings features over 150 portraits, including some Ptolemies and Seleukids and many private individuals.

Bibliography: Pantos 1985; 1989; 1996.

#### *Kedesh, Israel*

Floors of two adjoining rooms of an administrative building; ca. 200—shortly after 148 B.C.

2,043 clay sealings were discovered at Kedesh between 1999 and 2000. About 200 portraits will be published by Donald Ariel in the near future.

Bibliography: Herbert and Berlin 2000; Ariel and Naveh 2003; Herbert 2003; Herbert and Berlin 2003.

#### *Kyrene, Libya*

Building on the agora, identified as the *nomophylakeion* or “record office”; after 96 B.C.—early 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.

An Italian team discovered between 4,000 and 5,000 clay sealings in a building on the agora in the early twentieth century. It was identified as the *nomophylakeion* because the name of the record-keeping office appears on an inscription. The impressions mainly feature divinities such as Agathe Tyche, Apollo, and Aphrodite, but a few portraits, including Ptolemaic rulers and Roman emperors, are also found.

Bibliography: Maddoli 1964; Salzman 1984.

#### *Paphos, Cyprus*

Private house, “Haus des Dionysos”; mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century—ca. 30 B.C.



In the 1960s and 1970s, over 11,000 clay sealings, including over 1,000 with ruler portraits, mostly Ptolemaic, were discovered in a secondary context under late second- or early third-century A.D. mosaics. The excavators hypothesized that the building housing the city's public archive was destroyed in the late first-century B.C. or early first-century A.D., and the debris was moved to a quarry and later used for the bedding of the mosaics. Bibliography: Kyrieleis 1990a; 1990b; 1996; Nicolaou 1997; Kyrieleis 2002; 2004; 2015.

#### *Pella, Macedonia*

Building at the SW corner of the agora; 2<sup>nd</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. (?)

Over 100 clay sealings, fragments of a stylus, clay used for sealing, and a seal stone inscribed *Pellēs emporion* have been discovered during the Greek excavations of the agora at Pella since 1980. It is difficult to ascertain whether the public archive featured portraits since the sealings are only mentioned in passing in archaeological reports. Bibliography: Akamates 1988; 1989; 1990.

#### *Seleukeia on the Tigris, Iraq*

Largest hoard discovered in a public building on the NW side of the agora; before 256–after 129 B.C.

Over 25,000 sealings—mostly clay and some bitumen—were discovered at Seleukeia during the twentieth century. The largest hoard was excavated by the University of Turin between 1967 and 1972. The official character of the archive is evidenced in the over 15,000 (nearly half) impressions made with inscribed administrative stamps. The portraits, mainly Seleukid rulers and private individuals, are published in the first volume of *Seleucia al Tigri*. Smaller hoards were also found at Seleukeia. First, the excavations by the University of Michigan between 1927 and 1936 uncovered two small private archives in a residential area, published by Robert McDowell (1935). Finally, 22 scattered sealings, published by Vito Messina (2014), were discovered in the 1980s near the agora's southern limit and in a stoa.

Bibliography: McDowell 1935; Invernizzi 1968; 1971; 1996; Mollo 1996; 1997; Invernizzi 1998; Bollati 2000; 2001; Messina 2001; Bollati 2003; Messina 2003a; 2003b; 2005; 2006a; 2006b; 2014.

#### *Selinus, Sicily*

Temple C on the akropolis; after 409–249 B.C.

Between 1876 and 1883, 688 clay sealings—only 589 were legible—were discovered inside Temple C where part of a public archive had been hidden for safekeeping. Among the ca. 400 distinct matrices, most present standing figures and divinities, but some heads (about 40, rather generic) are also found.

Bibliography: Salinas 1883; 1898; Zoppi 1996.

#### *Titani/Gitani, Thesprotia*

Peristyle house (building A); 3<sup>rd</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.

A peristyle house excavated in 1987 by the Greek Ephorate yielded over 3,000 clay sealings. The archive, which contains numerous portraits, remains unpublished.

Bibliography: Preka-Alexandris 1989; 1996.

*Uruk/Orchoi, Iraq*

Anu-Antum Temple; ca. 320–141 B.C.

About 900 clay sealings, as well as many tablets, have been discovered scattered around several rooms of the Anu-Antum Temple since the beginning of the twentieth century during official excavations, mainly by German archaeologists, but also by locals. The sealings were sold piecemeal to various public and private collections (Oriental Institute of Chicago, Kaiser Friedrich (now Bode) Museum in Berlin, Morgan Library, Yale University, Louvre, Cabinet des médailles, Ashmolean Museum, Royal Museums in Brussels, National Museum of Copenhagen, and several private collections). The public archive features numerous official seals, including that of the *chreophylakes*. A dozen impressions feature portraits, mainly of Seleukid rulers.

Bibliography: Rostovtzeff 1932 (see n. 2 for earlier references); Wallenfels 1994; 1996; Lindström 2003; Hameeuw and Van Overmeire 2014.

*Zeugma, Turkey*

Majority found in a large building (trench 3), some in houses and shops, and others scattered in fourth-century A.D. destruction layer and topsoil; Hellenistic period (?)–2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.

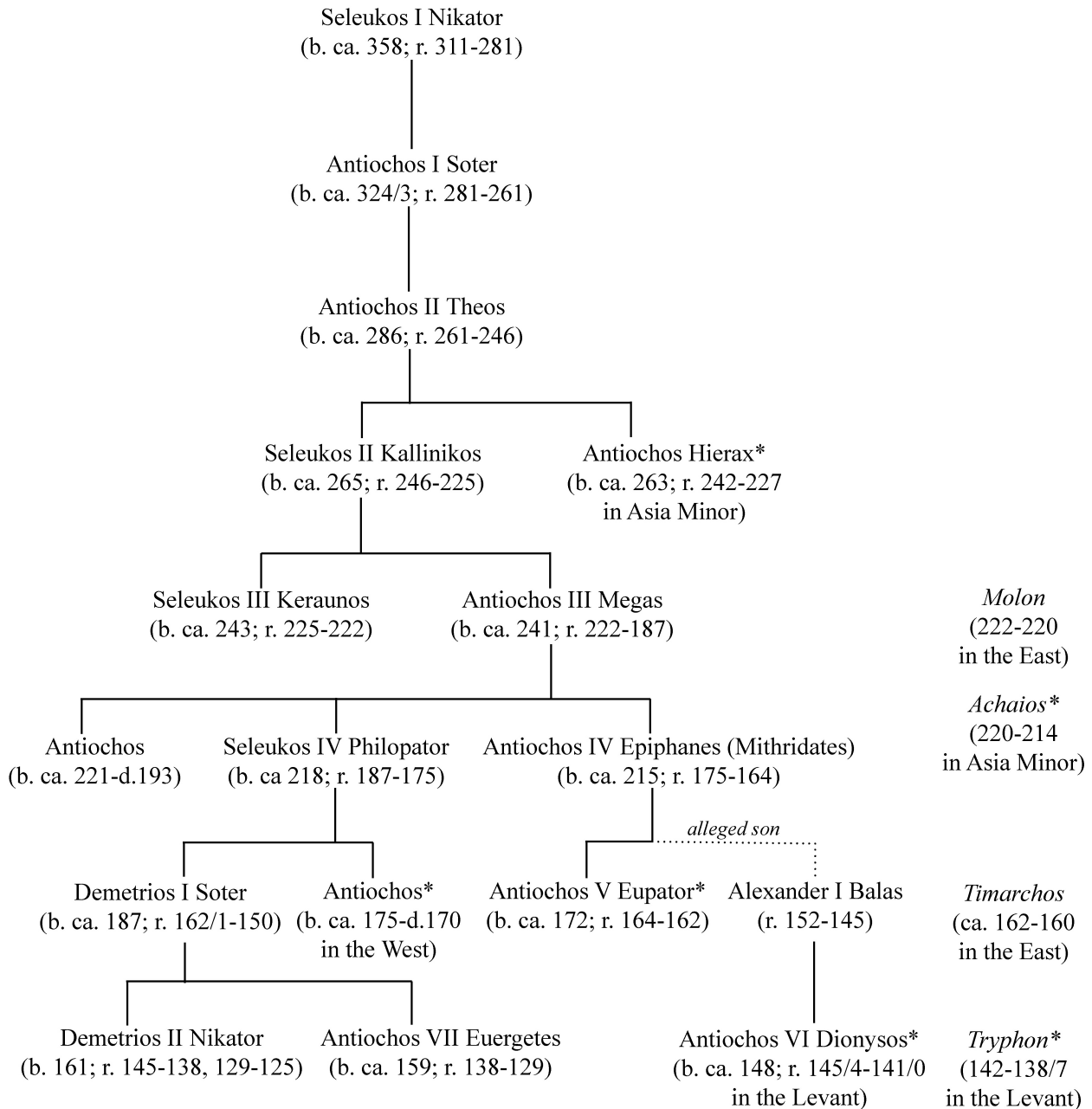
Over 150,000 clay sealings have been discovered since 1998. Most are unpublished.

Bibliography: Önal 2008; Herbert 2013.

## APPENDIX B

### Simplified Stemma of Seleukid Rulers from Seleukos I to Demetrios II (311–125 B.C.)

The following stemma is provided as a reading aid for Chapter 2. Whenever possible dates of birth (b.), death (d.), and regnal dates (r.) are indicated. Some are still uncertain or debated. An asterisk next to a name indicates that the ruler or usurper (in italics at right) did not mint any coinage at Seleukeia on the Tigris.



## APPENDIX C

### On the Origin of Cameos

The crux of the debate concerning cameos revolves around the date and provenance of the earliest examples. The history of collecting and modern taste for engraved precious stones have had a detrimental impact on our ability positively to identify the geographical and temporal origins of the rare specimens that can otherwise be attributed to the Hellenistic period on account of style and through comparison with datable miniatures such as portraits on coins. Hellenistic engravers did not invent the technique of cutting precious stone in relief. In fact, their predecessors fashioned miniature sculptures and various artifacts from hardstone as early as the late Neolithic period. New, however, was the use of banded stones, particularly several types of agate and onyx, to differentiate various relief planes in layered compositions. This appendix summarizes the previous scholarship concerning the dating of cameos and offers some updates based on recent numismatic work.

The issue that seems to be most easily settled is the geographical origin of the earliest cameos. A small group of cameos can securely be associated with Ptolemaic Egypt (pl. 52). Even if this location may not be the place where the technique was first “invented,” it surely represents the epicenter of the new artistic phenomenon. The majority of the specimens echo the idiosyncratic iconography of the Macedonian dynasty that took over Egypt after the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. Several portraits of ruler display the regalia of pharaohs or Egyptian divinities.<sup>440</sup> We know from visual sources that the Ptolemies adopted parallel iconographies soon after their rise to power as part of a strategy to maintain control over the conquered territory and a divided population.<sup>441</sup> Thus, it is not uncommon to find the same ruler depicted in full pharaonic regalia and then as a traditional Greek king (pl. 75.1–2). Several cameos display the blend of Greek style and Egyptian imagery so characteristic of Ptolemaic artworks. A sardonyx cameo mounted in an eighteenth-century setting, now in Paris, presents the draped bust of a king wearing a truncated *pschent*, the double crown representing his reign over unified Egypt (pl. 75.3). The fleshy profile with large eyes corresponds well to the dynastic image maintained by the Ptolemies throughout their rule. A similarly epicurean profile on a glass cameo from the British Museum can be associated with the same group. The king wears a diadem whose ends hang loose at the nape of his head, and a *kausia*, a cap worn by the Macedonian elite (pl. 75.4).

The collection of early cameos that can be linked to Ptolemaic Egypt also includes representations of syncretic divinities mixing Greek and Egyptian traditions. The head of the Egyptian goddess Isis, wearing either the vulture crown or the Libyan locks with the headdress of Hathor, adorns several examples (pl. 52.4–6). Another composition uses the multicolored layers of the stone to juxtapose the profiles of Zeus/Serapis and a female divinity (pl. 52.3). The

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<sup>440</sup> Plantzos 1996c.

<sup>441</sup> Some reliefs and sculptures represent the Ptolemaic rulers as typical pharaohs in Egyptian contexts such as temples. For Ptolemaic rulers as pharaohs, see Kyrieleis 1975; Koenen 1993; Stanwick 2003. For the cultural strategy of Ptolemaic rulers, see Maehler 2004.

format, usually known as “jugate portrait,” further supports the association with Ptolemaic Egypt since the earliest instance of such a composition—with superimposed male and female heads—is found on a coinage inaugurated by Ptolemaios II in the 260s representing his parents on the obverse and himself with his sister-wife Arsinoe II on the reverse (pl. 35.2).<sup>442</sup>

Finally, ancient literary sources point to the East as the source of layered stones of a size and quality suitable for large cameo carvings. Pliny the Elder states, quoting an earlier Greek author from the late fourth or early third century B.C., that the preferred source for “sardonyx,” a term used for several types of banded stones, was India and that “it might be actually large enough to be commonly made into sword hilts.”<sup>443</sup> The author also mentions several stones particularly well suited for cameo carving, one known as “Mormorion” or “Promnion” and originating from India and the other called “Alexandriion.”<sup>444</sup> Although Pliny does not elaborate any further concerning this “Alexandriion,” it is not unreasonable to think that it may refer to the Egyptian coastal city of Alexandria, a significant center of power and artistic production under the Ptolemies. It is probably to this city that we should trace the origin of several exquisite vessels carved in large banded stones such as the Cup of the Ptolemies and the Tazza Farnese (pls. 4, 76). The latter, a large libation bowl weighing over 1.4 kilograms, not only proclaims the wealth of Egypt and fecundity of the Nile (both through its complex imagery and access to raw material of exceptional quality) but also the astonishing skill of local artists. Carving the vessel from both sides and enhancing the multicolored layers with various heat and dyeing treatments along the way must have required a skill level that could only be replicated today with great difficulties (if at all!). The exceptional quality of the carving and astounding technical feat could only be the product of a long tradition of craftsmanship in Ptolemaic Egypt.

Let us now turn our attention to the most contentious issue: the dating of early cameos. Dimitris Plantzos best summarized the difficulties surrounding the question in a 1996 article.<sup>445</sup> I will first address the literary evidence and next the archaeological remains. Epigraphic evidence is of little help since the records are inconsistent in their terminology and often ambiguous. Furthermore, the etymology of the modern word “cameo” does not provide any help since it first appears in the medieval period and none of the linguistic hypotheses to explain its origins put forth until now have gained any traction.<sup>446</sup> Inventories from ancient sanctuaries’ treasuries list the material from which objects were made or their function but rarely any detailed description.<sup>447</sup> Hence, we read about metal rings and stone seals with no indication of the devices

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<sup>442</sup> Earlier representations of conjoined heads featured divinities such as the Dioskouroi (see for instance *SNG* Copenhagen 1981) or male heads only (*SNG* France 2511).

<sup>443</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.88.

<sup>444</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.173.

<sup>445</sup> Plantzos 1996a.

<sup>446</sup> The word cameo is first attested in twelfth-century manuscripts and is found in various European cognates (Plantzos 1996a, 115–6; Zwielerlein-Diehl 2007, 5).

<sup>447</sup> Plantzos 1996a; Kosmetatou 2003; 2004. Since the intrinsic value of the material from which works were fashioned was key to the commercial value of an artifact and treasuries were sometimes used for their cash value in times of crisis, it is hardly surprising that the inventories focused on material.

represented or the technique used. As demonstrated by Plantzos, it is probable that just as *sphragis* (“seal”) was used to describe an intaglio, regardless its actual function, *lithos* (“stone”) was the generic term used for gemstones whether they were carved in relief or just inserted as a plain bezel. Elizabeth Kosmetatou has stressed that a similar phenomenon happened with the term used for “relief,” *ektypon*, which could be used to describe any relief decoration in sculpture or jewelry.<sup>448</sup> Since Pliny uses this term to describe what appears to be a cameo in the first century A.D., it is likely that the Greeks did not make any linguistic distinctions between “relief” and “cameo”.<sup>449</sup>

One of the recently discovered epigrams by Poseidippos of Pella was used to argue that cameos were known to the poet as early as the mid third century B.C. and possibly earlier.<sup>450</sup> Poseidippos served as a court poet of the early Ptolemies.<sup>451</sup> He would have been particularly well positioned to see any such work since Ptolemaic Egypt seems to have been the epicenter of the new artistic tradition, as argued above. The epigrammatist describes a large gemstone engraved with an image of Darius on a chariot:

No neck or finger of any woman wore this carnelian  
but it was prepared for a golden chain,  
this lovely gem bearing the image of Darius—and under him  
an engraved chariot stretching the length of a span—,  
with light coming from below. And it holds its own against the rubies of India,  
when put to the test, with radiant beams of equal strength.  
Its circumference measures [three] spans. And this too is a marvel,  
that no watery cloud spreads through the wide mass.<sup>452</sup>

Kosmetatou interprets several clues as being indicative of a cameo, particularly the size and subject of the work. She compares favorably a span, or over 20 cm, to the largest extant cameos and argues that the complex subject would have been better served with a relief carving. Her reasoning is problematic. First, we cannot rely on material evidence since few gems of this size are extant and they all are from the Roman period such as the Grand Camée de France and the

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<sup>448</sup> Kosmetatou 2003, 40–1.

<sup>449</sup> Plin. *HN* 37.173. “These are gems [Mormorion] which are eminently suitable for cameo engravings (*ectypas sculpturas*).”

<sup>450</sup> Kosmetatou 2004.

<sup>451</sup> Gutzwiller 2005b.

<sup>452</sup> Poseidippos, *Lithika* 8. Translation adapted from Austin and Bastianini 2002.

οὐτ’ ἀκχῆν ἐφόρησε τὸ κάρδιον οὔτε γυναικῶν  
δάκτυλος, ἠρτήθη δ’ εἰς χρυσέην ἄλυσιν  
Δαρειῶν φορέων ὁ καλὸς λίθος – ἄρμα δ’ ὑπ’ αὐτὸν  
γλυφθὲν ἐπὶ πιθαιμῆν μήκεος ἐκτέταται –  
φ]έγγος ἔνερθεν ἄγων· κα[ι] αμύνεται ἄνθρ[α]κας Ἰνδρῶν  
αὐγαῖς ἐξ ὀμαλοῦ φωτῶν ἐλεγχόμενος·  
τριπ]ιθαιμον περίμετρον· ὁ καὶ τέρας, εἰ πλατὺν ὄγκον  
ἔνδοθε]ν ὑδρηλ[ή] μὴ διαθεῖ νεφέλη.

Gemma Augustea. Second, she fails to mention that large intaglios are also known.<sup>453</sup> More importantly, she overlooks a crucial innovation of Hellenistic cameo carving, i.e., the use of layered stones.<sup>454</sup> Indeed, hardstones had been carved in relief for millennia by the time Poseidippos composed his encomium.<sup>455</sup> Whether or not the large stone was engraved in intaglio or in relief—a question that cannot be answered with any degree of certainty, Poseidippos does not describe a layered stone. He celebrates a carnelian of exceptional quality, *precisely because* it has no flaws such as inclusions or unwanted layers (“watery cloud”)! Not only is the *sardion* praised for its transparency in lines 5–6, but the epigram also ends with the exceptional purity of the stone. In the end, Poseidippos’ epigrams have little bearing on the question at hand, despite their cultural significance and literary qualities.

A piece of epigraphic evidence is sometimes marshaled to argue that cameos were known by the beginning of the second century B.C. A *prostagma* issued by the Seleukid king Antiochos I during the spring of 193 establishes a cult for queen Laodike overseen by the royal administration.<sup>456</sup> The edict stipulates that “just as high-priests of us [the king] are appointed throughout the kingdom, so there should be established, in the same places, high-priestesses of her, who will wear golden crowns *bearing her image* (added emphasis).”<sup>457</sup> Although the inscription provides no further description, some scholars have suggested that the crowns may have been adorned with cameo portraits. However, no decree describes such an artifact, presumably because they would have been known by the administration. The word choice is

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<sup>453</sup> For instance, a sard intaglio in the Antikensammlung, Berlin, showing one of the Horai and sometimes attributed to the engraver Solon (inv. FG 6712), measures about 9 cm in height. Admittedly, one of the large cameos Kosmetatou mentions, the Gonzaga Cameo, is much larger with a greatest extent of over 15 cm, but her other examples, the Vienna and Berlin cameos, are closer to the Berlin intaglio in size.

<sup>454</sup> Kosmetatou seems to miss the issue, which was already clearly formulated by Plantzos (1996a, 120). “Cutting a cameo entails two basic notions: that of cutting a precious stone in relief, as opposed to cutting in intaglio, thus precluding its use as a seal; cameos are not meant to be practical. The second important point of definition is, it seems, the use of a layered stone, taking advantage of the layers’ different colours. The use of the term to suggest stones cut in relief, but in a single layer and without colour variation seems to be confusing the issue, allowing early datings for cameos with no archaeological context.”

<sup>455</sup> The large onyxes, probably statuettes or other objects, are also mentioned in temple inventories from the Classical period (Plantzos 1999, 13–6).

<sup>456</sup> Three versions of the edict are known: from Dodurga, Turkey (*OGIS* 224); from Nehavend, Iran (Robert 1949, 5–22); and from Kermanshah, Iran (1967).

<sup>457</sup> *OGIS* 224, lines 10–15. The two other versions of the edict confirm the reconstructions.

...[κρ]ίνομεν δὲ καθάπερ  
[ἡμ]ῶν [ἀπο]δείκ[ν]υ[ν]ται κατὰ τὴν βασιλεί-  
[αν ἀρχ]ιερεῖς, καὶ ταύτης καθίστασθαι  
[ἐν τ]οῖς αὐτοῖς τόποις ἀρχιερείας, αἱ φο-  
[ρ]ήσουσιν στεφάνους χρυσοῦς ἔχοντας  
[εἰκόνας αὐ]τῆς ...

ambiguous: *eikōn*, here translated as “image,” could designate a wide range of representations as discussed in Chapter 3.

Material evidence provides examples of what the Seleukid priestesses may have worn. However, no specimen can be securely dated before the Roman period.<sup>458</sup> A medallion with a profile head attached to a *tainia* (headband) sits high on the forehead of a priest’s bust in the Museo Pio Clementino (pl. 77.1).<sup>459</sup> Some scholars have suggested that the medallion is a cameo while others argue that it should rather be understood as some metalwork.<sup>460</sup> The marble bust is too damaged to ascertain the exact nature of the frontlet, especially since no setting is visible. Even more problematic, the marble bust has been dated either to the late Hellenistic period or the late Republican period/early Imperial period *on the basis of style alone*. Furthermore, such medallions with a profile head are rarely found on crowns. Most comparanda rather show *protomai*-like projections resembling miniature busts in hardstone or metal *emblemata* (pl. 77.2). Other portraits of priests and priestesses, found in Asia Minor and farther east at sites such as Palmyra, show that by the Roman period headdresses with projecting busts were very common. Indeed, several hardstone *emblemata* found around the Mediterranean appear too large and inconvenient to have been set on rings, pendants, and other items of jewelry. They may very well have been attached to crowns, such as the 10 cm tall bust of Isis expertly carved in plasma now in Naples (pl. 78.1). To summarize, while it is tempting to interpret the medallion worn by the Vatican priest as a cameo, nothing links his headdress with the Seleukid edit, particularly since the piece is unique, unprovenanced, and probably dates from the Roman period.

A plaster cast of a large roundel with jugate heads of a royal couple (pl.78.2) in Alexandria is also sometimes used by the proponents of an early dating of cameos to argue not only that the beginning of cameo-making should be dated from the early third century B.C. at the latest but also that large format cameos, exemplified in several superlative examples (pl. 79), should be dated from the same period.<sup>461</sup> Some scholars have recognized in the plaster cast a cameo of Ptolemaios I (323–283) and his wife Berenike I.<sup>462</sup> However, while the identification of the portraits is convincing, the description of the manufacturing technique is less so. Several excavations in Athens, Egypt, and Afghanistan have yielded a large number of such plaster casts.<sup>463</sup> They all seem to have been taken from metalware, probably for the purpose of replication. Nothing on our plaster cast suggests that it should be understood otherwise. On the

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<sup>458</sup> Rumscheid 2000.

<sup>459</sup> Musei Vaticani, Museo Pio Clementino, Sala dei Busti, inv. 716. For further reference see Spinola 1996, no. 125; Rumscheid 2000, 81.

<sup>460</sup> Hafner 1971, 158.

<sup>461</sup> Alexandria, Greco-Roman Museum, inv. 24354. The plaster medallion was first published as a plaster cast of a metalwork (Adriani 1938, 77–8). Although the portraits on the large cameos (pl. 79) are difficultly identifiable and none have provenance, I am of the opinion that these cameos should rather be dated to the late Hellenistic/early Imperial period on account of style and iconography.

<sup>462</sup> Möbius 1964, 17; Kyrieleis 1975, 6; Megow 1985, 461.

<sup>463</sup> For plaster casts, see Rubensohn 1911; Hackin 1954, 137–46, 265–75; Richter 1958; Reinsberg 1980; Burkhalter 1983; Menninger 1996. For clay impressions, see Williams 1976.



contrary, the Alexandria medallion presents all the characteristics of toreutic works rather than glyptic. A border in relief comparable to that seen on the preserved lower right edge of the Alexandria cast encircles a plaster roundel showing a ruler in profile discovered in Begram (pl. 80.1).<sup>464</sup> Even the diameters of the two pieces correspond rather well. The original diameter of the Alexandria cast (15 cm in its current state of preservation) would have certainly approached the 19 cm of the Begram piece. In all likelihood, the Alexandria medallion was molded after an *emblema* inserted in a precious metal vessel.<sup>465</sup>

Now that the most recurrent arguments in favor of an early dating of cameos have been addressed and largely dismissed, we need to turn to the remaining archaeological evidence. First, I propose to approach the problem in terms of chronological boundaries rather than fixed date. Since no cameos have been found in late Classical and early Hellenistic tombs it is unlikely that the technique appeared before the third century B.C.<sup>466</sup> We also know that the new technique was well known by the late first century B.C. at the latest since the group of cameos presented above can only originate from Ptolemaic Egypt. Another supporting piece of evidence, albeit small, lies in the geographical origin of the banded stones used for cameo carving—India, if we are to believe Pliny. The Macedonian conquests as far east as the Hydaspes and Indus rivers in 326 B.C., subsequent installment of Greco-local kingdoms in those areas, and eventual treaties between the Seleukid and Mauryan empires must have facilitated the intensification of trade in the area and exchange of goods and raw materials. The preferred sea routes for this east-west trade followed today's Indian, Pakistani, and Iranian coastlines and then crossed either to the Persian Gulf and overland through the Arabian Peninsula, or to the Red Sea and overland through Egypt.<sup>467</sup> A similar trade route is attested in the transport of almandine-type garnets, which were particularly popular as engraving material for Ptolemaic intaglios and jewelry.<sup>468</sup>

The chronological brackets can be further defined through archaeological material discovered at two securely dated sites: the sealing archive of Delos and a burial on the Taman Peninsula, north of the Black Sea. Both support the dating of early cameos before the first century B.C. It is worth noting that the few cameos found in dated contexts, mainly tombs, seem to have been in circulation for some time before burial since they appear worn.<sup>469</sup>

Let us first look at the evidence from Delos.<sup>470</sup> There, the excavators discovered eighteen sealings impressed with a device in relief in a private building (pl. 80.2).<sup>471</sup> This proverbial needle in the haystack of some 16,000 sealings provides a *terminus ante quem* of 69 B.C., the probable date of the archive's destruction, for the first possible use of a cameo as a seal. However, the impressions do not provide any information regarding the use of layered stones and neither do they date the device for two reasons. First, the archival records of Delos probably

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<sup>464</sup> Hackin 1954, 270, nos. 132, 312, 312 bis.

<sup>465</sup> For examples, see Lapatin 2015, 36–41.

<sup>466</sup> Plantzos 1996a, 121.

<sup>467</sup> Salles 2009.

<sup>468</sup> Spier 1989; Thoresen and Schmetzer 2013.

<sup>469</sup> Plantzos 1996a, 127–8.

<sup>470</sup> On the archive of Delos, see Appendix A.

<sup>471</sup> Boussac 1988, 326 n. 71.

span a century and there is no way to know whether the device was used in 170 or 70 B.C. since the documents are lost. Second, if the device was indeed a cameo, it may have been in circulation for a long time before it was impressed on soft clay in Delos. Finally, another sealing archive, found at Titani in Greece, also features an impression made with a “relief seal.”<sup>472</sup> This would push back the *terminus ante quem* for a possible cameo used as a seal to the mid second century B.C. Unfortunately the preliminary archaeological report is somewhat cryptic and does not illustrate the sealing.

Tomb II of the Artyukov Barrow excavated in 1879 in the Tanam Peninsula provides what might be considered the first securely dated cameo (pl. 60).<sup>473</sup> The tomb contained the burials of a male and a female along with rich funeral gifts and a coin each, respectively a gold stater from a Bosporan ruler and another of a Lysimachos type minted at Byzantium.<sup>474</sup> The female’s assemblage was the most elaborate with a wreath, various items of jewelry, and domestic items such as a lamp, box mirror, and several pieces of metalware. Among the rings figured a sardonyx cameo set in a gold ring representing Eros chasing a butterfly. The dating of the two gold coins, which could provide chronological anchors for the burials, has long been problematic and was resolved with certainty only recently.<sup>475</sup> The production of Lysimachos-type staters at Byzantium spanned the third and second centuries B.C. Henry Seyrig dated the specific issue of the Artyukov Barrow stater to around 150 B.C. His conclusion was supported recently by Constantin Marinescu’s work.<sup>476</sup> Furthermore, Nina Frolova reviewed the entire numismatic production of the Bosporan kings in the second century B.C. and convincingly placed the other stater, minted by a Bosporan king named Pairisades, soon after the middle or the third quarter of the second century B.C.<sup>477</sup> Even taking into consideration that gold coins, as objects of a certain cachet, were sometimes kept for some time before burial, the close chronological proximity of the two staters support a dating of the tumulus no later than the last quarter of the second century B.C. We can conclude that the earliest *archaeologically dated* cameo was carved *at the latest* in the mid second century B.C. I would argue that the gem was probably carved long before the burial because it shows signs of wear and even of having been refurbished in antiquity. A drill hole running vertically through the stone clearly indicates that the piece was originally mounted on a swivel ring. It was worn as such for some time since both ends of the hole are chipped. It was subsequently given a new mount, the large ring in which it is now set, which itself is abraded around the bezel. Unfortunately it is impossible to date this life cycle with any certainty, but it is not unreasonable to think that the ring was somewhat of an heirloom by the mid second century B.C.

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<sup>472</sup> Preka-Alexandris 1989, 169. On the archive of Titani, see Appendix A.

<sup>473</sup> Minns 1913, 404, 430–2.

<sup>474</sup> Stroganoff 1879, xlvi–xlvi; Stefani 1880, 78–9.

<sup>475</sup> Contrarily to what has sometimes been asserted (Kosmetatou 2003, 40), a late third/early second century B.C. date for the cameo has long been refuted on the basis of numismatic evidence (Maksimova 1979, 7–9).

<sup>476</sup> Seyrig 1968, 183–200; Marinescu 1996.

<sup>477</sup> Frolova 2013.

The arguments presented above lead to the following conclusions regarding the date and origin of the earliest cameos. The introduction of the new technique (carving layered stones in relief) happened during the Hellenistic period *some time before* the mid second century B.C. Ptolemaic Egypt emerges as an influential center of the craft and *possibly* the location of its “invention.” These elements represent the extent of our factual knowledge, pending new discoveries. The fact that we are left with a wide temporal bracket for the beginning of cameo making should neither be problematic nor surprising. In any case, it is probably futile to try to pinpoint a specific date for the “invention” of the technique. The phenomenon probably evolved over time in the early Hellenistic period.

## TABLES

Table 1. Selection of Seleukid numismatic portraits from Seleukos I to Demetrios II.

Ruler	Numismatic type (silver tetradrachm ; * for gold octadrachm or stater)	Issuing mint	Reverse type	Principle 1a Novelty	Principle 1b Typology	Principle 1c Die	Principle 2a Mint	Principle 2b Court	Principle 2c Event
Seleukos I	SC 173.1	Susa	Nike crowning trophy	x (new iconography on obverse and reverse)	x (first and only portrait during his lifetime)	x (Marest-Caffey 2016)			x (commemorative issue after the battle of Ipsos)
Seleukos I, posthumous	SC 471	Baktra/Aï Khanoum mint	horned horse head	x (new obverse iconography)	x (first posthumous portrait)	x (only known specimen)		x (residence of Antiochos I from ca. 296 to ca. 276)	
Seleukos I, posthumous	SC 322	Sardis	horned horse head		x (first posthumous portrait at Sardis)	x (only known specimen)	x (most important mint in Asia Minor)	x (royal residence for some years after relocation from Baktria ca. 276)	

Ruler	Numismatic type (silver tetradrachm ; * for gold octadrachm or stater)	Issuing mint	Reverse type	Principle 1a Novelty	Principle 1b Typology	Principle 1c Die	Principle 2a Mint	Principle 2b Court	Principle 2c Event
Seleukos I, posthumous	SC 323.1	Sardis	Apollo on omphalos	x (new reverse type)	x (new horn configuration)	x (the relative order of SC 323.1a and b is uncertain but the dies were clearly cut from the same prototype)	x (most important mint in Asia Minor)	x (royal residence for some years after relocation from Baktria ca. 276)	
Antiochos I	SC 426*	Baktra/Ai Khanoum	horned horse head	x (although the horse head reverse is found on Seleukos I's coinage, its pairing with a lifetime portrait is new)	x (probably first portrait of Antiochos, since a die link between tetradrachms point to a rejuvenation of portraits throughout time. See SC 1, 151)	x (only known specimen)	x (major source of gold bullion)	x (residence of Antiochos I as coregent from ca. 296 to ca. 276)	
Antiochos I	SC 324	Sardis	Apollo on omphalos	x (new reverse type)		x (possible first die)	x (most important mint in Asia Minor)	x (royal residence for some years after relocation from Baktria ca. 276)	

Ruler	Numismatic type (silver tetradrachm ; * for gold octadrachm or stater)	Issuing mint	Reverse type	Principle 1a Novelty	Principle 1b Typology	Principle 1c Die	Principle 2a Mint	Principle 2b Court	Principle 2c Event
Antiochos I	SC 335.1	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Apollo on omphalos			x (Le Rider 1999)	x (principal mint in Syria; growing importance)		
Antiochos I	SC 378.1	Seleukeia on the Tigris	Apollo on omphalos			x (only known specimen)	x (most important mint)		
Antiochos II	SC 519	Sardis	Apollo on omphalos		x (first portrait of Antiochos II, late in his reign)	x (only die known)	x (most important mint in Asia Minor)	x (royal residence for part of the reign)	
Antiochos II	SC 571.1	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Apollo on omphalos			x (Le Rider 1999)		x (location of royal wedding in 252)	
Seleukos II	SC 689.1	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Apollo with tripod	x (new reverse type)	x (first portrait of Seleukos II)	x (Le Rider 1999)	x (most important mint)		
Seleukos II	SC 654.1	Sardis	Apollo with tripod	x (new reverse type)		x (probable first die of portrait with sideburn)	x (most important mint before the revolt of Antiochos Hierax)		
Antiochos Hierax	Too varied to determine								
Seleukos III	SC 920* and 921.1 (sharing dies)	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Apollo on omphalos		x (first portrait of Seleukos III)	x (Le Rider 1999)	x (principal mint)	x (western capital)	x (accession donative?)

Ruler	Numismatic type (silver tetradrachm ; * for gold octadrachm or stater)	Issuing mint	Reverse type	Principle 1a Novelty	Principle 1b Typology	Principle 1c Die	Principle 2a Mint	Principle 2b Court	Principle 2c Event
Antiochos III	SC 1037* and 1041.1 (sharing dies)	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Apollo on omphalos		x (first of portrait type Ai)	x (Le Rider 1999)	x (principal mint)	x (soon after his accession at Babylon, Antiochos III moved the court to Antiocheia on the Orontes)	x (accession donative?)
Antiochos III	SC 1043.1	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Apollo on omphalos		x (first of portrait type B)	x (Le Rider 1999)	x (principal mint)	x (capital)	x (intended for presentation after Armenian campaign?)
Antiochos III	SC 1039*	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Apollo on omphalos		x (first of portrait type Ci)	x (Le Rider 1999)	x (principal mint)	x (capital)	x (intended for presentation after eastern campaign?)
<i>Molon</i>	SC 950	Susa	Nike crowning trophy	x (re-use of a century-old reverse type)	x (only portrait of Molon)	x (only known specimen)			
<i>Achaios</i>	SC 953.1	Sardis	Athena Promachos	x (new reverse type)	x (only portrait of Achaios)		x (sole mint)		

Ruler	Numismatic type (silver tetradrachm ; * for gold octadrachm or stater)	Issuing mint	Reverse type	Principle 1a Novelty	Principle 1b Typology	Principle 1c Die	Principle 2a Mint	Principle 2b Court	Principle 2c Event
Seleukos IV	SC 1313.1	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Apollo on omphalos		x (first portrait of Seleukos IV)	x (Le Rider 1999)	x (most important mint; reorganized by Seleukos IV after the death of his father)	x (capital)	
Antiochos, son of Seleukos IV	SC 1368*	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Apollo on omphalos	x (first Seleukid jugate portrait)	x (only portrait of Laodike IV and her son)	x (Le Rider 1999)	x (most important mint)	x (capital)	x (accession donative?)
Antiochos, son of Seleukos IV	SC 1369	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Apollo on omphalos		x (first portrait of Antiochos)	x (Le Rider 1999)	x (most important mint)	x (capital)	
Antiochos IV	SC 1395.1	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Apollo on omphalos		x (first portrait of Antiochos IV)	x (Le Rider 1999)	x (most important mint)	x (capital)	
Antiochos IV	SC 1472	Ptolemais	Apollo on omphalos	x (new obverse iconography)		x (Mørkholm 1963)			
Antiochos V	SC 1575.1	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Zeus Nikephoros	x (reuse of an older reverse type)		x (Le Rider 1999)	x (most important mint)	x (capital)	x (reverse die link with a gold octadrachm, a possible accession donative)



Ruler	Numismatic type (silver tetradrachm ; * for gold octadrachm or stater)	Issuing mint	Reverse type	Principle 1a Novelty	Principle 1b Typology	Principle 1c Die	Principle 2a Mint	Principle 2b Court	Principle 2c Event
Antiochos V	SC 1581	Ptolemais	Apollo on omphalos		x (probable first portrait of Antiochos before his accession; see SC 1, 136)	x (only obverse die known)			
Demetrios I	SC 1634	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Tyche holding cornucopia	x (new reverse type)	x (first portrait of Demetrios I)	x (personal communication with A. Houghton and O. Hoover)	x (most important mint)	x (capital)	
Demetrios I	SC 1686	Seleukeia on the Tigris	Tyche holding cornucopia		x (rare jugate portrait)	x (overstuck on a tetradrachm of Timarchos)		x (eastern capital)	x (wedding commemorative)
<i>Timarchos</i>	SC 1589	Ekbatana	Dioskouroi on horseback	x (new obverse and reverse iconography)	x (only portrait of Timarchos)	x (one of the two known specimens shows traces of overstriking)	x (most important mint)	x (raised his army in Media)	
Alexander I	SC 1781.1	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Zeus Nikephoros		x (first portrait of Alexander I)	x (personal communication with A. Houghton and O. Hoover)	x (most important mint)	x (capital)	

Ruler	Numismatic type (silver tetradrachm ; * for gold octadrachm or stater)	Issuing mint	Reverse type	Principle 1a Novelty	Principle 1b Typology	Principle 1c Die	Principle 2a Mint	Principle 2b Court	Principle 2c Event
Alexander I	SC 1841	Ptolemais	Zeus Nikephoros		x (new jugate portrait with Kleopatra Thea in the foreground; Ptolemaic influence)	x (only known die)	x (earliest mint under his control)		x (wedding commemorative)
Demetrios II	SC 1906.1	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Apollo on omphalos		x (first portrait of Demetrios II)	x (personal communication with A. Houghton and O. Hoover)	x (most important mint at the beginning of his reign)	x (capital)	
Demetrios II	SC 2164	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Zeus Nikephoros		x (first portrait with long beard)	x (personal communication with A. Houghton and O. Hoover)	x (first mint captured upon escape from Parthia)	x (capital)	
Antiochos VI	SC 2009.1	Apamea on the Orontes	Dioskouroi on horseback		x (first radiate portrait)	x (Houghton 1992)	x (most important mint before 143)	x (capital before 143)	
Antiochos VI	SC 2000.1	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Dioskouroi on horseback			x (personal communication with A. Houghton and O. Hoover)	x (most important mint after 143)	x (capital after 143)	

Ruler	Numismatic type (silver tetradrachm ; * for gold octadrachm or stater)	Issuing mint	Reverse type	Principle 1a Novelty	Principle 1b Typology	Principle 1c Die	Principle 2a Mint	Principle 2b Court	Principle 2c Event
<i>Tryphon</i>	SC 2029	Antiocheia on the Orontes	Spiked helmet	x (new reverse type)	x (first portrait of Tryphon)	x (personal communication with A. Houghton and O. Hoover)	x (most important mint)	x (capital)	
Antiochos VII	SC 2075	Seleukeia in Pieria	Athena Nikephoros	x (new reverse type)	x (first portrait of Antiochos VII)		x (first mint)	x (residence of Kleopatra Thea)	

Table 2. Identification of Seleukid portrait matrices found in the archive of Seleukeia on the Tigris.

Matrix cat. no. (Messina and Mollo 2004)	Probable seal material (S for stone; M for metal)	Identification by author	Numismatic comparanda	Identification by Messina and Mollo	Disagreement	Seleukid Era date	B.C. date (Macedonian year)
Se 1	M	posthumous Seleukos I	SC 471; SC 323.1	Seleukos I		Associated with stamps dated 73–100	240/39–213/2
Se 2	M	posthumous Seleukos I	SC 471; SC 323.1	Seleukos I			
Se 3	M	Seleukos I?		Seleukos I or Antiochos I		Associated with stamps dated 70	243/2
Se 4	?	Antiochos I	SC 426; SC 335.1	Antiochos I			
Se 5	S	Antiochos I	SC 426; SC 335.1	Antiochos I			
Se 6	M	Not a ruler portrait		Antiochos I	x		
Se 7	M	Seleukos II	SC 689.1	Seleukos II			
Se 8	M	Seleukos II?	SC 689.1	Seleukos II			
Se 9	M	Antiochos II	SC 519; SC 571.1	Seleukos II	x		
Se 10	S	Achaïos?	SC 953.1	Seleukos II	x	Associated with stamps dated 99	214/3
Se 11	S?	Seleukos II?		Seleukos II or Antiochos Hierax			
Se 12	?	Antiochos III?	SC 104.1.1	Seleukos II or Antiochos Hierax			
Se 13	S	Antiochos III	SC 1039	Antiochos III			
Se 14	?	Antiochos III	SC 1039	Antiochos III			
Se 15	S?	Antiochos III	SC 1039	Antiochos III			
Se 16	M	Antiochos III	SC 1039	Antiochos III			
Se 17	M?	Antiochos III	SC 1039	Antiochos III			
Se 18	M	Antiochos III	SC 1039	Antiochos III			
Se 19	S	Antiochos III	SC 1039	Antiochos III			

Matrix cat. no. (Messina and Mollo 2004)	Probable seal material (S for stone; M for metal)	Identification by author	Numismatic comparanda	Identification by Messina and Mollo	Disagreement	Seleukid Era date	B.C. date (Macedonian year)
Se 20	M	?		Antiochos III?		Associated with stamps dated 92	221/0
Se 21	?	?		Antiochos III?			
Se 22	?	Antiochos III?	SC 1039	Antiochos III?			
Se 23	M	Seleukos IV/Antiochos IV?	SC 1313.1; SC 1472	Antiochos III?	x		
Se 24	M	?		Antiochos?			
Se 25	?	?		Antiochos as Dionysos?			
Se 26	S?	?		Antiochos, son of Antiochos III, and Laodike		Associated with stamps dated 97	216/5
Se 27	S	?		Antiochos, son of Antiochos III, and Laodike		Associated with stamps dated 105	208/7
Se 28	M	?		Antiochos, son of Antiochos III, and Laodike?			
Se 29	?	?		Antiochos, son of Antiochos III, and Laodike?		Associated with stamps dated 123	190/89
Se 30	S?	Antiochos IV	SC 1395.1	Seleukos IV	x		
Se 31	S	Antiochos IV	SC 1395.1	Seleukos IV	x		
Se 32	M	Seleukos IV	SC 1313.1	Seleukos IV			
Se 33	M?	?		Seleukos IV			
Se 34	S?	Seleukos IV	SC 1313.1	Seleukos IV			
Se 35	?	?		Seleukos IV			
Se 36	?	?		Seleukos IV			
Se 37	?	?		Seleukos IV		Associated with stamps dated 131	182/1
Se 38	?	?		Seleukos IV?			
Se 39	?	?		Seleukos IV?			
Se 40	S	Antiochos IV	SC 1472	Antiochos IV			

Matrix cat. no. (Messina and Mollo 2004)	Probable seal material (S for stone; M for metal)	Identification by author	Numismatic comparanda	Identification by Messina and Mollo	Disagreement	Seleukid Era date	B.C. date (Macedonian year)
Se 41	M?	?		Antiochos IV			
Se 42	M	Seleukos IV/Antiochos IV?	SC 1313.1; SC 1472	Demetrios I	x		
Se 43	S	Demetrios I and Laodike V	SC 1686	Demetrios I and Laodike			
Se 44	?	Timarchos?	SC 1589	Timarchos or Alexander I			
Se 45	?	Timarchos?	SC 1589	Timarchos or Alexander I			
Se 46	?	Timarchos?	SC 1589	Timarchos or Alexander I			
Se 47	S	Demetrios II, second reign	SC 2164	Demetrios II, second reign			
Se 48	S	Demetrios II, second reign	SC 2164	Demetrios II, second reign			
Se 49	M	Demetrios II, second reign?	SC 2164	Demetrios II, second reign, or Mithridates I			
Se 50	S?	?		Seleukid satrap			
Se 51	?	?		Seleukid satrap			

Table 3. Portraits engraved facing left or in frontal and three-quarter view in the archives of Kedesh, Paphos, and Seleukeia on the Tigris.

Archives	Possible portraits	Facing left (percentage)	Frontal or three-quarter (percentage)
Kedesh	261	2 (0.8%)	0
Paphos	785	15 (1.9%)	2 (0.3%)
Seleukeia on the Tigris	1331	37 (2.8%)	47 (3.5%)

Table 4. Formats used to represent divinities and heroes in the archive of Seleukeia on the Tigris.

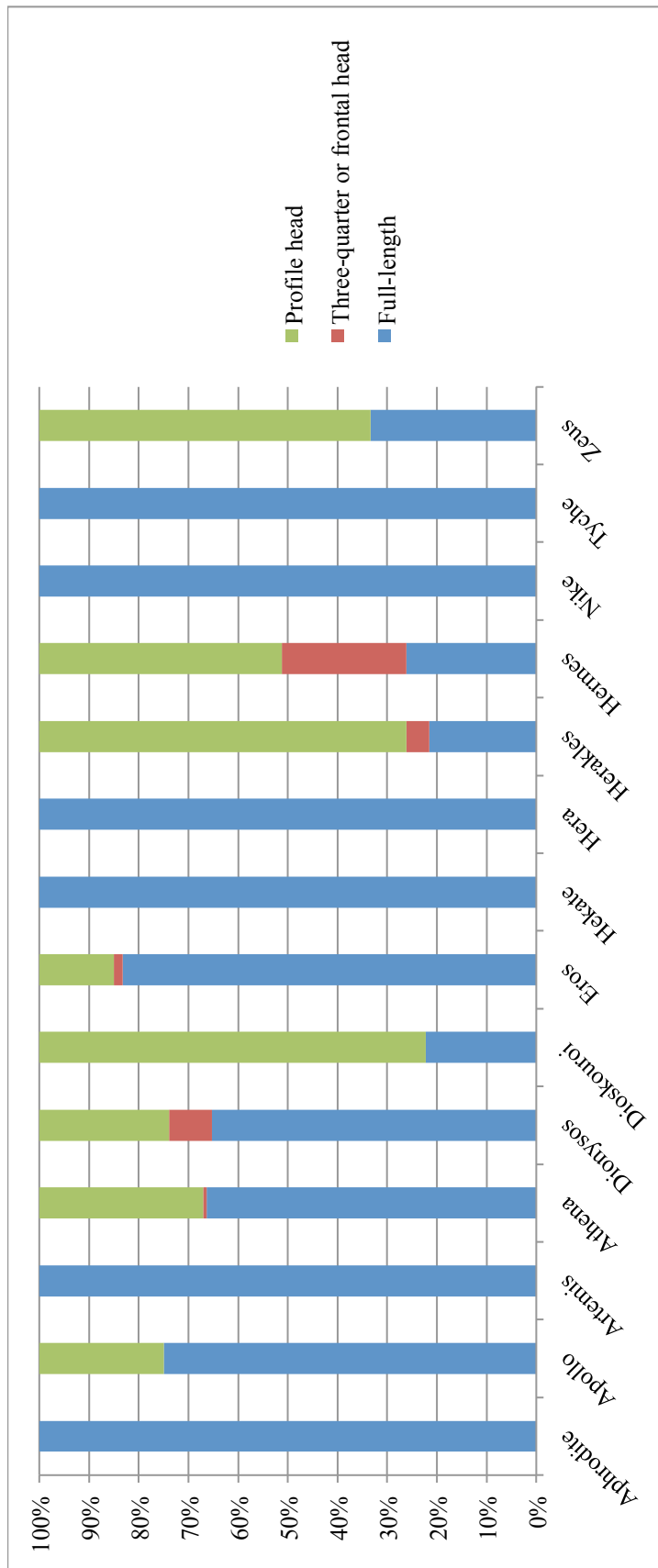


Table 5. List of sealings from Egypt found still attached to their document or container.

Trismegistos no.	Type	Description	Sealing count	Date (BC) or Ptolemaic	Findspot	Publication	Portrait matrices	Other matrices	Portrait description	Other description
541	container	amphora	1		Bakchias	Davoli 2005, no. T11	0	1		cobra with vegetal element
572	container	amphora	1		Bakchias	Davoli 2005, no. T50a	0	2		two matrices with oblong elements
573	container	amphora	1		Bakchias	Davoli 2005, no. T51	0	1		Greek inscription
576	container	amphora	1		Bakchias	Davoli 2005, no. T63	0	1		Greek inscription
609	container	other container	1		Bakchias	Davoli 2005, no. C15	0	1		two figures, one seated (same as no. 610)
610	container	other container	1		Bakchias	Davoli 2005, no. C16	0	1		two figures, one seated (same as no. 609)
620	container	amphora	1		Bakchias	Davoli 2005, no. C26	0	1		probably an Egyptian goddess
639	container	other container	1		Bakchias	Davoli 2005, no. C46	0	1		male figure, striding
654	container	unknown container	1		Bakchias	Davoli 2005, no. C61	0	1		bust of goddess wearing crown and large pectoral
704	container	amphora	1		Bakchias	SB VI 9223, l. 8-9	0	2		Amun; Harpokrates
782-785	papyrus	six-witness contract, marriage	2	310	Elephantine	<i>P. Eleph.</i> 1	1	3	female head (pl. 62.2)	Eros with a bow (pl. 62.1; Herakles (pl. 62.3); helmet on a column (pl. 62.4)
787-797	papyrus	six-witness contract, will	3	284	Elephantine	<i>P. Eleph.</i> 2	2	8	frontal Alexander (pl. 62.6); female head in profile (pl. 62.15)	eagle (pl. 62.5); woman in chiton (pl. 62.7); Thoth (pl. 62.8); mask (pl. 62.9); Artemis (x3; pl. 62.10-11); herm (pl. 62.12); caricature? (pl. 62.13); Herakles (pl. 62.14)



Trismegistos no.	Type	Description	Sealing count	Date (BC) or Ptolemaic	Findspot	Publication	Portrait matrices	Other matrices	Portrait description	Other description
798-802	papyrus	six-witness contract concerning the guardianship of a woman	2	283	Elephantine	<i>P. Eleph.</i> 3	1	4	male head in profile (pl. 62.19)	satyr with cup (pl. 62.16); horsehead (pl. 62.17); Apollo with bow (pl. 62.18); helmeted head, Athena? (pl. 62.20)
805-813	papyrus	six-witness contract concerning the guardianship of a woman	3	282	Elephantine	<i>P. Eleph.</i> 4	3	6	diademed, male head, maybe Ptolemaios II (pl. 62.25); young female head in profile (pl. 62.27); young male head in profile (pl. 62.29)	Gorgoneion (pl. 62.21); reclining woman, Aphrodite? (pl. 62.22); Dionysos head (pl. 62.23); bearded mask (pl. 62.24); woman with cup (pl. 62.26); dog (pl. 62.28);
817-818	papyrus	six-witness contract	2	259	Birta	<i>P. Cair. Zen.</i> I 59003	0	2		head of Herakles; winged goddess (belonging to witnesses)
831	papyrus	six-witness contract	1	130	Hermonthis	<i>P. Bad.</i> II 2	0	1		two figures, one seated
855-856	papyrus	six-witness contract	1	108	Akoris	<i>Pap. Ludg. Bat.</i> XXII 17	0	1		Isis and Sarapis (x2; same as no. 861)
861	papyrus	six-witness contract	1	105	Akoris	<i>Pap. Ludg. Bat.</i> XXII 20	0	1		Isis and Sarapis (same as nos. 855-856)
872-873	papyrus	six-witness contract	1	74	Neilopolis	<i>SB V</i> 7532	0	0		no device
874	papyrus	notary contract	1	129	Thebes	<i>PSI IX</i> 1016	0	0		no device
876	papyrus	notary contract	1	115	Thebes	<i>P. Stras.</i> II 81	0	0		fingertip
877	papyrus	notary contract	1	110	Thebes	<i>PSI IX</i> 1018	1	0	bearded head with head covering (same as nos. 878, 879; belonging to the <i>agoranomos</i> Apollonios)	

Trismegistos no.	Type	Description	Sealing count	Date (BC) or Ptolemaic	Findspot	Publication	Portrait matrices	Other matrices	Portrait description	Other description
878	papyrus	notary contract	1	106	Thebes	<i>PSI</i> IX 1022	1	0	bearded head with head covering (same as nos. 877, 879; belonging to the agoranomos Apollonios)	
879	papyrus	notary contract	1	105	Thebes	<i>UPZ</i> II 181	1	0	bearded head with head covering (same as nos. 877, 878; belonging to the agoranomos Apollonios)	
880	papyrus	notary contract	1	116	Pathyris	<i>P. Lond.</i> VII 2191	0	0		no device
882	papyrus	notary contract	1	113	Pathyris	<i>P. Lond.</i> III 1204	1	0	female head to left (belonging to Ammonios deputy of the notary Heliodoros)	
884	papyrus	notary contract	1	111	Pathyris	<i>P. Stras.</i> II 86	1	0	back of head (belonging to Ammonios deputy of the notary Sosos)	
885	papyrus	notary contract	1	108	Krokodilopolis	<i>P. Adl.</i> 5	1	0	profile of female head (belonging to deputy Paniskos or notary Sosos)	
887	papyrus	notary contract	1	101	Pathyris	<i>P. Adl.</i> 12	1	0	profile of a man with horn and diadem, Alexander (same as nos. 889, 891, 895, 896; sealed by notary Hermias I on behalf of Paniskos, notary of Krokodilopolis)	
889	papyrus	notary contract	1	99	Pathyris	<i>P. Köln</i> I 50	1	0	profile of a man with horn and diadem, Alexander (same as nos. 887, 891, 895, 896; sealed by notary Hermias I on behalf of Paniskos, notary of Krokodilopolis)	

Trismegistos no.	Type	Description	Sealing count	Date (BC) or Ptolemaic	Findspot	Publication	Portrait matrices	Other matrices	Portrait description	Other description
891	papyrus	notary contract	1	99	Pathyris	<i>P. Lond.</i> III 1207	1	0	profile of a man with horn and diadem, Alexander (same as nos. 887, 889, 895, 896; sealed by notary Hermias I on behalf of Paniskos, notary of Krokodilopolis)	
892	papyrus	notary contract	1	99	Pathyris	<i>P. Lond.</i> III 1206	0	0		no device
893	papyrus	notary contract	1	99	Pathyris	<i>P. Stras.</i> II 89	1	0	Female profile with a helmet (same as no. 897; sealed by notary Hermias I on behalf of Paniskos, notary of Krokodilopolis)	
894	papyrus	notary contract	1	99	Pathyris	<i>BGU</i> III 999	0	1		Sarapis and Isis (sealed by Hermias I)
895	papyrus	notary contract	1	98	Pathyris	<i>P. Adl.</i> 11	1	0	profile of a man with horn and diadem, Alexander (same as nos. 32, 34, 36, 41; sealed by notary Ammonios on behalf of Paniskos, notary of Krokodilopolis)	
896	papyrus	notary contract	1	98	Pathyris	<i>P. Adl.</i> 21	1	0	profile of a man with horn and diadem, Alexander (nos. 887, 889, 891, 895; sealed by notary Ammonios on behalf of Paniskos, notary of Krokodilopolis)	
897	papyrus	notary contract	1	97	Pathyris	<i>P. Lond.</i> III 1208	1	0	female profile with a helmet (same as no. 893; sealed by notary Ammonios)	
898	papyrus	notary contract	1	89	Pathyris	<i>P. Lond.</i> III 1209	0	1		Isis? (sealed by notary Hermias II)

Trismegistos no.	Type	Description	Sealing count	Date (BC) or Ptolemaic	Findspot	Publication	Portrait matrices	Other matrices	Portrait description	Other description
899-901	papyrus	tax receipt	3	257	Philadelphia	<i>Pap. Ludg. Bat. XX 1</i>	1	2	bearded head	palmette; pointed, curving object
905	papyrus	receipt	1	257	Philadelphia	<i>Pap. Ludg. Bat. XX 4</i>	0	1		god Ptah (belonging to the Egyptian workman who received the salary)
907	papyrus	salary receipt	1	257	Philadelphia	<i>Pap. Ludg. Bat. XX 11</i>	0	1		female figure to right (belonging to the Greek who received salary for his employees)
908	papyrus	salary receipt	1	256	Philadelphia	<i>P. Cair. Zen. I 59117</i>	0	1		human figure (belonging to the Egyptian workman who received the salary)
909	papyrus	salary receipt	1	256	Philadelphia	<i>P. Cair. Zen. I 59119</i>	0	1		animal, panther? (belonging to the Greek who received his salary)
910	papyrus	salary receipt	1	256	Philadelphia	<i>P. Lond. VII 1959</i>	0	0		no device
911	papyrus	receipt	1		Philadelphia	<i>P. Col. Zen. I 24</i>	0	1		ram's head?
914	papyrus	receipt	1		Krokodilopolis	<i>P. Hawara OI 7c</i>	0	0		no device
918-919	papyrus	tax receipt	1	239	Krokodilopolis	<i>SB XVI 12342</i>	0	0		no device
920-921	papyrus	tax receipt	2	236	Hawara	<i>SB XVI 12344</i>	1	1	profile head (belonging to the unnamed official)	Egyptian sign for life (belonging to the Egyptian female taxpayer named Haynchis)
922	papyrus	receipt	1		Hawara	<i>SB XVIII 13314</i>	1	0	profile head to right	
923	papyrus	receipt	1	158	Thebes	<i>P. Haun. I 11</i>	1	0	diademed, male head, Alexander or Ptolemaios I? (probably belonging to the banker)	
924-925	papyrus	receipt	2	150-148	Memphis	<i>UPZ I 114.1</i>	0	2		Athena Parthenos; Apollo (same as no. 928)

Trismegistos no.	Type	Description	Sealing count	Date (BC) or Ptolemaic	Findspot	Publication	Portrait matrices	Other matrices	Portrait description	Other description
928	papyrus	receipt	1	150-148	Memphis	<i>UPZ I</i> 114.2	0	1		Apollo (same as nos. 924-925)
932	papyrus	petition	1	254	Philadelphia	<i>P. Mich. I</i> 34	0	0		no device
933	papyrus	order for payment	1	254	Philadelphia	<i>P. Mich. I</i> 37	0	0		no device
934	papyrus	order for payment	1	254	Philadelphia	<i>P. Col. Zen. I</i> 36	0	1		mummified figure, cartouche, goddess Maat? (belonging to the Egyptian man Petosiris, writer of the order)
938	papyrus	royal oath	1	223/2	Apollonopolis (Elephantine)	<i>P. Eleph. 23</i>	0	1		Isis and Sarapis (belonging to the oath taker)
939	papyrus	acknowledgment of debt	1	278		<i>P. Münch. inv. 1</i>	0	1		uraeus (belonging to the debtor)
943	papyrus	acknowledgment of debt	1		Thebes-Koptos	<i>Pap. Ludg. Bat. XVII</i> 12	0	0		no device
944	papyrus	acknowledgment of debt	1	199	Thebes	<i>P. Brit. Mus. inv. 10831</i>	0	1		Egyptian device (belonging to the debtor)
944	papyrus	acknowledgment of debt	1		Thebes	<i>P. Brit. Mus. inv. EA10614</i>	0	1		Egyptian device
963	papyrus	business letter	1	3rd cent.		<i>P. Cair. Zen. III</i> 59392	1	0	frontal bust (belonging to the sender)	
965	papyrus	business letter	1	258		<i>P. Cair. Zen. I</i> 59027	0	1		Athena Promachos (belonging to the sender)
969	papyrus	business letter	1	257		<i>P. Lond. VII</i> 1935	0	0		no device
973	papyrus	business letter	1	252		<i>P. Lond. VII</i> 1983	1	0	youthful male head	
974	papyrus	business letter	1	250		<i>P. Lond. VII</i> 1998	0	0		probably no device

Trismegistos no.	Type	Description	Sealing count	Date (BC) or Ptolemaic	Findspot	Publication	Portrait matrices	Other matrices	Portrait description	Other description
975	papyrus	official letter ordering a rent to be paid	1	181	Arsinoites	<i>P. Col.</i> II 122	1	0	male head, possibly the sender (sealed by Lysimachos; pl. 68.5)	
976	papyrus	official letter asking to pay a soldier his wages	1	127	Qarara	<i>P. Bad.</i> IV 47	1	0	diademed head (belonging to a military official)	
980	papyrus	letter	1	2nd cent.	Pathyris	<i>P. Louvre</i> dem. Inv. E 10596	0	0		fingertip
981	papyrus	private letter	1			<i>P. Brit. Mus.</i> inv. 10076A	0	1		Egyptian device
982	papyrus	private letter	1			<i>P. Brit. Mus.</i> inv. 10076B	0	1		Hellenistic device
983	papyrus	private letter	1			<i>P. Brit. Mus.</i> inv. 10076C	0	0		no device
997-1003	papyrus	oracular letter	3	2nd-1st cent.	Hermopolis	<i>P. Michael.</i> A-G	0	3		Egyptian signs
1004	papyrus	oracular letter	1	3rd-2nd cent.	Tebtymis	<i>SB XXIV</i> 16259	0	0		no device
1008	papyrus	oracular letter	1		Soknopaiou Nesos	<i>P. Zauzich</i> 44	1	0	diademed head to right (probably sealed by a temple official)	
1009	papyrus	oracular letter	1		Soknopaiou Nesos	<i>P. Zauzich</i> 45	0	1		two full-length figures
1015-1017	papyrus	regulations of a cult guild	1	109/6	Thebes	<i>P. Berlin</i> inv. 3115	0	1		inscription
1018	papyrus	report by priest	1		Elephantine	<i>P. Dodgson</i>	0	1		Egyptian device

Trismegistos no.	Type	Description	Sealing count	Date (BC) or Ptolemaic	Findspot	Publication	Portrait matrices	Other matrices	Portrait description	Other description
1243	papyrus	royal ordinance in response to a petition	1		written in Alexandria; found in Memphis	UPZ I 106	0	1		eagle (sealed by Ptolemaios X; pl. 63.1)
1250	papyrus	lease	1		Girza	<i>P. Brit. Mus.</i> inv. EA 10560	1	0	female head to right (x4)	
1253	papyrus	acknowledgment of debt	1	201	Thebes-Koptos	<i>P. Brit. Mus.</i> inv. 10425	0	0		no device

Table 6. Distribution of papyri with sealing(s) impressed or not impressed (from Table 5).

Description	Count	Sealings Count	Matrices Count
Papyrus sealed with unimpressed sealing(s)	17	17	N/A
Papyrus sealed with impressed sealing(s)	63	76	86

Table 7. Elephantine Papyri contractants and their seal.

Reference	Document type	Date	Name	Role	Place of origin	Seal device	Signed
<i>P. Eleph. 1</i>	marriage contract	Aug./Sept. 310	Herakleides	husband	Temnos	possibly Eros with bow	
			Demetria	wife	Kos	possibly female head	
			Kleon	witness	Gela		
			Antikrates	witness	Temnos		
			Lysis	witness	Temnos		
			Dionysos	witness	Temnos		
			Aristomachos	witness	Cyrene		
			Aristodikos	witness	Kos		
<i>P. Eleph. 2</i>	will	June/July 284	Dionysos	husband	Temnos	eagle	x
			Kallista	wife	Temnos	Thoth	x
			Metrodoros	son	Temnian parents	woman in chiton	x
			Bakchios	son	Temnian parents	Artemis	x
			Herakleides	son	Temnian parents	Artemis	x
			Herakleitos	syngrophylax/witness	Temnos	caricature?	x
			Simonides	witness	Maroneia	frontal Alexander	x
			Polykrates	witness	Arcadia	mask	x
			Noumenios	witness	Crete	herm	x
			Lysis	witness	Temnos	Herakles	x
			Androstheneis	witness	Kos	female head	x
<i>P. Eleph. 3</i>	guardianship contract	Feb. 282	Elaphion	unmarried woman	Syria		
			Pantarkes	kyrios		satyr with cup	x
			Antipatros	new guardian	Arcadia	horsehead	x
			Pankrates	syngrophylax/witness	Arcadia	lost?	x



Reference	Document type	Date	Name	Role	Place of origin	Seal device	Signed
			Diphilos	witness	Phokis	Apollo with bow	x
			Epinikos	witness	Chalcis	male head	x
			Xenokles	witness	Rhodes	helmeted head, Athena?	x
			Kaphisios	witness	Phokis	illegible	x
			Athenagoras	witness	Alexandria	illegible	x
<i>P. Eleph. 4</i>	guardianship contract	July 283	Elaphion	unmarried woman	Syria	young female head	x
			Dios	kyrios		gorgoneion	x
			Pantarkes	new guardian	Arcadia	Dionysos head	x
			Nikagoras	syngraphophylax/witness	Cyrene	reclining woman, Aphrodite?	x
			Rhodokles	witness	Aegina	bearded mask	x
			Aphrodisios	witness	Side	diademed male head, perhaps Ptolemaios II	x
			Kleonikos	witness	Arcadia	woman with cup	x
			Thaliarchos	witness	Cyrene	dog	x
			Dionysos	witness	Magnesia	young male head	x

Table 8. Distribution of matrices by subject (from Table 5).

Subject	Count
Non-ruler portrait	17
Ruler portrait	4
Alexander	2
Other device	63

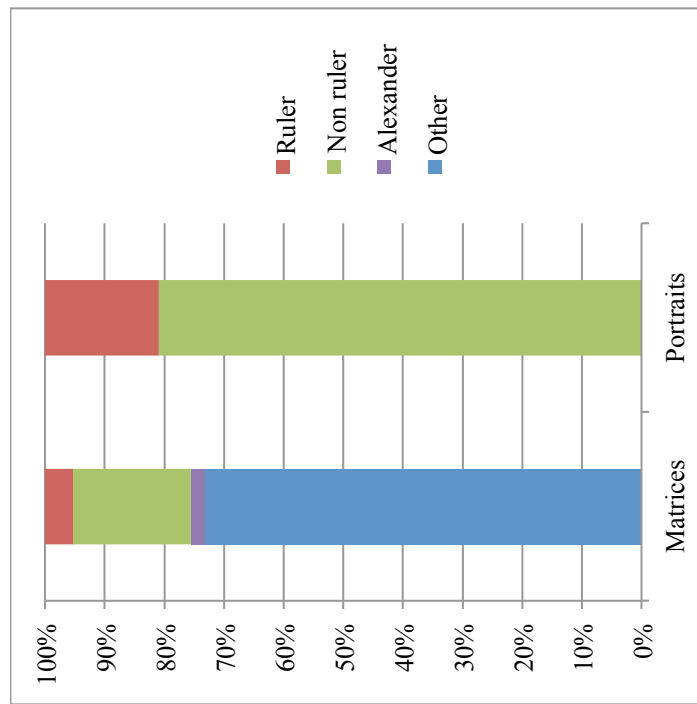


Table 9. Distribution of portrait matrices and impressions from the archives of Seleukeia on the Tigris and Delos.

Archive	Sealings	Impres- sions	Matrices	Portrait matrices	Portrait impressions	Ruler matrices	Ruler impressions	Non-royal portrait matrices	Non-royal portrait impressions
Seleukeia on the Tigris	+25,000	31,286	6,248	1,331	2,881	95	250	1,236	2,631
Delos	≈16,000	≈27,000	5,647	582	946	44	120	538	826

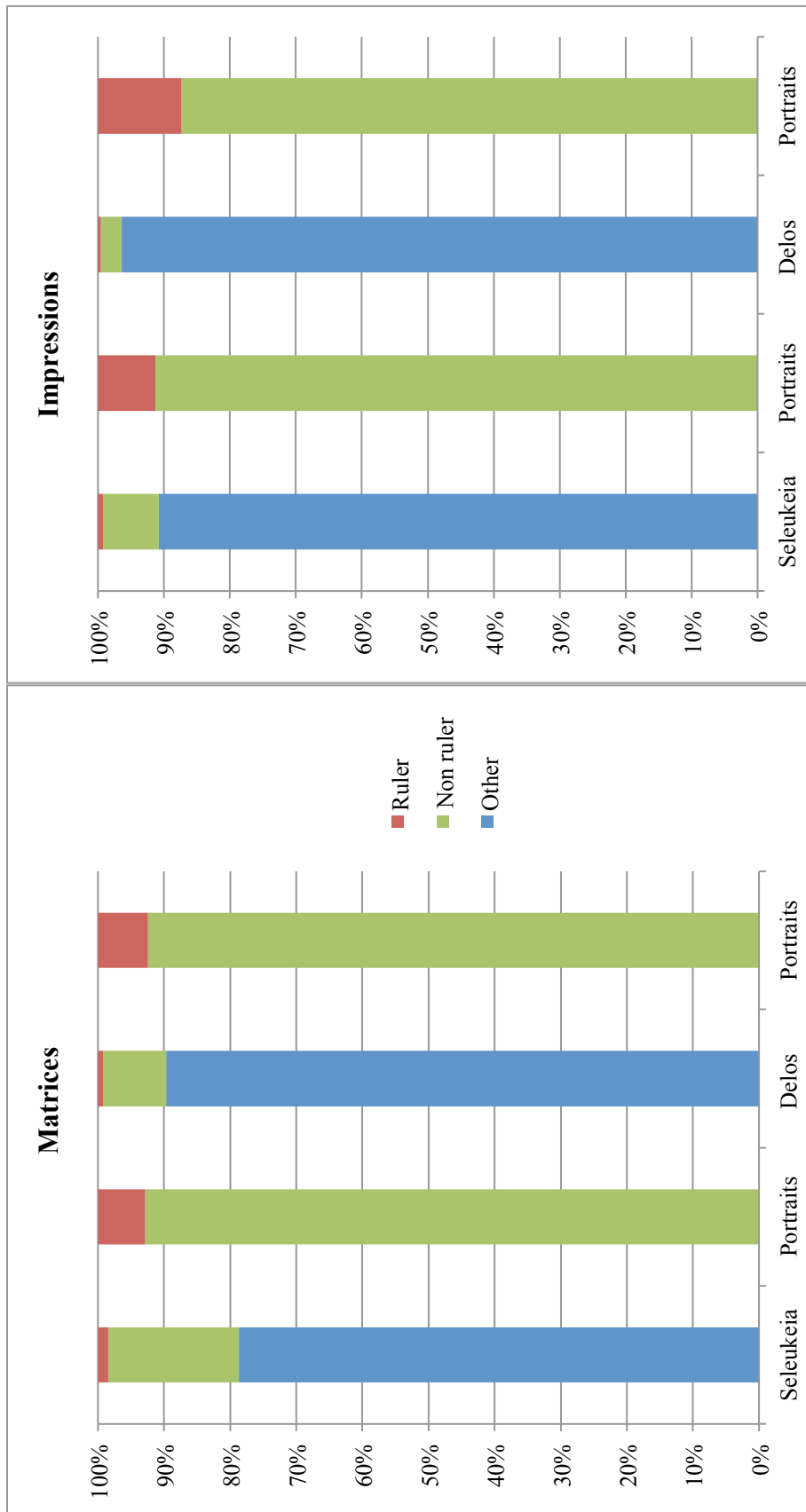


Table 10. List of sealings impressed with ruler portraits in the archive of Seleukeia on the Tigris.

Sealing cat. no. (Messina and Mollo 2004)	Ruler portrait cat. no.	Other possible portraits TM = male head TF = female head Tin = uncertain head	Administrative stamps Alk = salt tax Adk = slave tax Kat = registration Sik = tax on grain sale Tri = sale tax Inc = uncertain	Divinities and heroes	Other devices	Probable nature of document
S-3265	Se 23					
S-3272	Se 1	TF 212		Tk 88	M 153; illegible	
S-3959	Se 1	TIn 186; TIn 192		Ekt 139	AF 18 (x2)	
S-3975	Se 6			Er 297 (x2)	AF 109	
S-3981	Re 15				AR 65	
S-4010	Se 1				illegible	
S-4460	Se 26		Alk 13 (exempt; S.E. 97)			Salt tax receipt in 216/5 B.C.
S-5274	Al 3					
S-6089	Se 27		Alk 30 (exempt; S.E. 105)			Salt tax receipt in 208/7 B.C.
S-6645	Ca 1					
S-7209	Re 3	TM 58			If 101; Im 11; illegible	
S-7666	Se 32					
S-7668	Se 32					
S-7670	Se 32					
S-7671	Se 32					
S-7672	Se 32					
S-7673	Se 32					
S-7674	Se 32					
S-7675	Se 32					

Sealing cat. no. (Messina and Mollo 2004)	Ruler portrait cat. no.	Other possible portraits TM = male head TF = female head Tin = uncertain head	Administrative stamps Alk = salt tax Adk = slave tax Kat = registration Sik = tax on grain sale Tri = sale tax Inc = uncertain	Divinities and heroes	Other devices	Probable nature of document
S-7676	Se 32					
S-7677	Se 32					
S-7678	Se 32					
S-7679	Se 32					
S-7681	Se 32					
S-7682	Se 32					
S-7683	Se 32					
S-7684	Se 32					
S-9212	Al 6		Alk 73 (exempt; S.E. 126)			Salt tax receipt in 187/6 B.C.
S-9266	Re 27		Alk 36 (non exempt; S.E. 108)			Salt tax receipt in 205/4 B.C.
S-9338	Se 32					
S-9348	Re 31					
S-9350	Re 31					
S-9678	Se 32		Alk 76 (non exempt; S.E. 127)			Salt tax receipt in 186/5 B.C.
S-9744	Se 14					
S-9919	Se 22					
S6-782	Se 32					
S6-839	Se 32					
S6-876	Se 2					
S6-887	Se 47					
S6-951	Re 14	TM 235	Alk 92 (exception and date unknown)			Salt tax receipt

Sealing cat. no. (Messina and Mollo 2004)	Ruler portrait cat. no.	Other possible portraits TM = male head TF = female head Tin = uncertain head	Administrative stamps Alk = salt tax Adk = slave tax Kat = registration Sik = tax on grain sale Tri = sale tax Inc = uncertain	Divinities and heroes	Other devices	Probable nature of document
S6-984	Se 37	TM 220	Alk 83 (exempt; S.E. 131)		Em 51; M 59	Salt tax receipt in 182/1 B.C.
S6-1049	Se 19					
S6-1063	Se 19					
S6-1184	Se 40					
S6-1309	Se 47					
S6-1398	Se 15					
S6-1400	Se 47					
S6-1411	Se 47					
S6-1429	Se 47					
S6-1430	Se 47					
S6-1432	La 3					
S6-1443	La 3					
S6-1465	Se 18					
S6-1657	Se 47					
S6-1663	Se 47					
S6-1674	Se 47					
S6-1679	Se 18					
S6-1744	Se 47					
S6-1746	Se 47					
S6-1747	Se 51	TM 375				
S6-1786	Se 47					
S6-1931	Re 26					

Sealing cat. no. (Messina and Mollo 2004)	Ruler portrait cat. no.	Other possible portraits TM = male head TF = female head Tin = uncertain head	Administrative stamps Alk = salt tax Adk = slave tax Kat = registration Sik = tax on grain sale Tri = sale tax Inc = uncertain	Divinities and heroes	Other devices	Probable nature of document
S6-2383	Al 4					
S6-3156	Re 21					
S6-3169	Re 23	TM 58				
S6-3632	Re 9					
S6-3751	Se 25					
S6-3903	Se 11					
S6-4640	Se 47					
S6-4649	Se 47					
S6-4712	Se 17					
S6-5429	Se 21					
S6-6366	Re 16		Alk 85 (exempt; S.E. 133)	ApT 10	M 59	Salt tax receipt in 180/79 B.C.
S6-6504	Re 17		Alk 85 (exempt; S.E. 133)	ApT 10	M 59	Salt tax receipt in 180/79 B.C.
S6-7265	Se 32					
S6-7412	Se 51	TM 472				
S6-7432	Se 32					
S6-8187	Se 2					
S6-8331	Se 29		Alk 67 (exempt; S.E. 123)		If 183; illegible	Salt tax receipt in 190/89 B.C.
S6-8745	Se 2					
S6-9894	Se 41					
S6-10023	Se 10		Alk 17 (exempt; S.E. 99)			Salt tax receipt in 214/3 B.C.

Sealing cat. no. (Messina and Mollo 2004)	Ruler portrait cat. no.	Other possible portraits TM = male head TF = female head Tin = uncertain head	Administrative stamps Alk = salt tax Adk = slave tax Kat = registration Sik = tax on grain sale Tri = sale tax Inc = uncertain	Divinities and heroes	Other devices	Probable nature of document
S6-11096	Re 18		Alk 13 (exempt; S.E. 97)			Salt tax receipt In 216/5 B.C.
S6-12524	Se 2					
S6-12593	Se 2					
S6-12766	Se 49					
S7-78	Re 25					
S7-79	Ba 1		Alk 27 (non exempt; S.E. 103)			Salt tax receipt in 210/09 B.C.
S7-1735	Re 29		Alk 68 (non exempt; S.E. 123)			Salt tax receipt in 190/89 B.C.
S7-2047	Re 2		Alk 59 (exempt; S.E. 119)		OdT 1	Salt tax receipt in 194/3 B.C.
S7-2096	Se 32					
S7-2255	Se 2					
S7-2554	La 2		Alk 47 (exempt; S.E. 114)			Salt tax receipt in 199/8 B.C.
S7-2814	Re 28					
S7-2850	Se 32					
S7-2851	Se 32					
S7-2860	Se 33					
S7-2888	Se 2				GyT 20	
S7-2893	Se 32					
S7-2894	Se 32					
S7-2910	Se 2					
S7-3330	Se 31					



Sealing cat. no. (Messina and Mollo 2004)	Ruler portrait cat. no.	Other possible portraits TM = male head TF = female head Tin = uncertain head	Administrative stamps Alk = salt tax Adk = slave tax Kat = registration Sik = tax on grain sale Tri = sale tax Inc = uncertain	Divinities and heroes	Other devices	Probable nature of document
S7-3331	Se 30					
S7-3339	Se 13					
S7-3633	Se 42					
S7-3683	Se 28				Og 324; illegible	
S7-3685	Se 2					
S7-3741	Re 1					
S7-3787	Re 8					
S7-3917	Se 32					
S7-3999	Re 5					
S7-4032	Se 2					
S7-4034	Se 45					
S7-4038	Se 34					
S7-4039	Se 34					
S7-4040	Se 46					
S7-4041	Se 44					
S7-4042	Se 34					
S7-4045	Se 35					
S7-4046	Se 34					
S7-4047	Se 34					
S7-4049	Se 16					
S7-4052	Se 34					
S7-4058	Se 48					

Sealing cat. no. (Messina and Mollo 2004)	Ruler portrait cat. no.	Other possible portraits TM = male head TF = female head Tin = uncertain head	Administrative stamps Alk = salt tax Adk = slave tax Kat = registration Sik = tax on grain sale Tri = sale tax Inc = uncertain	Divinities and heroes	Other devices	Probable nature of document
S7-4067	Se 38					
S7-4101	Se 24			AtT 35 (x2)		
S7-4319	Re 30		Alk 86 (non exempt; S.E. 133)	ApT 10	M 59	Salt tax receipt in 180/79 B.C.
S7-4338	Se 5					
S7-4661	Se 7					
S7-4662	Se 2					
S7-4667	Se 2					
S7-4668	Se 2					
S7-4669	Se 5					
S7-4680	Se 5; Se 8					
S7-4689	Se 51					
S7-4694	Se 51					
S7-4745	Se 32					
S7-4763	Al 1					
S7-4767	Ca 1				Gorgon (no cat. no.)	
S7-4769	Ca 1					
S7-4834	Ca 1					
S7-4873	Se 36					
S7-4874	Se 32					
S7-4897	Se 2					
S7-4898	Se 2					
S7-4899	Se 2					

Sealing cat. no. (Messina and Mollo 2004)	Ruler portrait cat. no.	Other possible portraits TM = male head TF = female head Tin = uncertain head	Administrative stamps Alk = salt tax Adk = slave tax Kat = registration Sik = tax on grain sale Tri = sale tax Inc = uncertain	Divinities and heroes	Other devices	Probable nature of document
S7-4900	Se 2					
S7-4901	Se 2					
S7-4902	Se 2					
S7-4903	Se 2					
S7-4904	Se 2					
S7-4905	Se 2					
S7-4906	Se 2					
S7-4907	Se 2					
S7-4908	Se 2					
S7-4909	Se 2					
S7-4910	Se 2					
S7-4911	Se 2					
S7-4912	Se 2					
S7-4925	Se 2					
S7-5020	Se 2					
S7-5231	Se 7					
S7-5262	Se 51					
S7-5322	Se 2					
S7-5323	Se 2					
S7-5325	Se 5					
S7-5330	Se 2					
S7-5335	Se 5					

Sealing cat. no. (Messina and Mollo 2004)	Ruler portrait cat. no.	Other possible portraits TM = male head TF = female head Tin = uncertain head	Administrative stamps Alk = salt tax Adk = slave tax Kat = registration Sik = tax on grain sale Tri = sale tax Inc = uncertain	Divinities and heroes	Other devices	Probable nature of document
S7-5690	Re 20; Re 24	TM 443; TIn 313		Ek 7; Nf2	AR 52 (x2); AF 21 (x2); Cv 3 (x2); Ae 1; illegible (x2)	
S7-6396	Re 4					
S7-6435	Se 39					
S7-6740	Se 5; Re 19					
S7-6757	Se 5					
S7-6777	Se 43					
S7-6815	Se 43					
S7-6830	Se 32					
S7-6848	Re 10					
S7-6908	Se 2					
S7-6927	Al 5					
S7-6929	Re 22					
S7-6931	Se 9					
S7-6932	Se 12					
S8-282	Se 50	TM 94			AF 76; GyT 18	
S9-319	Se 4	TM 230		EKT 49		
S9-320	Se 1			Ap 145	I 6	
S9-323	Se 1			Tk 89	Ae 2; If 100	
S9-333	La 1		Adk 9 (non exempt); Kat 12 (both S.E. 82)	EgT 13; AtT 69		Slave sale in 231/0 B.C.
S9-344	Se 3	TM 110; TM 197			Og 57; Og 285	

Sealing cat. no. (Messina and Mollo 2004)	Ruler portrait cat. no.	Other possible portraits TM = male head TF = female head Tin = uncertain head	Administrative stamps Alk = salt tax Adk = slave tax Kat = registration Sik = tax on grain sale Tri = sale tax Inc = uncertain	Divinities and heroes	Other devices	Probable nature of document
S9-345	Se 1			Ap 10		
S9-346	Se 3		Kat 4 (S.E. 70)	Nk 7; Nk 25	Em 76; If 8; If 215	Sale in 243/2 B.C.
S9-347	Se 1	TM 293; TM 343; TM 84		Tk 162	Em 76	
S9-348	Se 1	TM 199	Kat 17 (S.E. 90)	Tk 209	If 74; AR 386	Sale in 223/2 B.C.
S9-350	Se 1			Tk 89; EkT 59	Ae 2; Om 7; If 100; illegible	
S9-351	Se 1		Kat 10; Tri 5; Inc 2 (all S.E. 77)	Nk 2	AR 159; Og 47	Probably slave sale in 236/5 B.C.
S9-352	Se 1			HmT 65; AtT 26; Ap 67	I 62; Og 283	
S9-353	Se 1		Kat 18 (S.E. 91)	Tk 97; Hm 11; Ap 155	Em 38; Of 185; illegible	Sale in 222/1 B.C.
S9-354	Se 1	TM 439	Kat 27 (date unknown)	Hm 14	If 67; illegible	Sale
S9-356	Se 1	TM 105; TM 199	Kat 18 (S.E. 91)	AtT 40; Ap 77; ApT 13; Tk 96; Hm 11	Em 38	Sale in 222/1 B.C.
S9-357	Se 3			Nk 25; DsT 3	Of 118; Om 32; If 98; Im 65; Vg 4; Em 47; Em 76	
S9-358	Se 1		Kat 6; Tri 2 (both S.E. 73)	Ap 177; Er 296; Tk 87	StT 15; Im 65; illegible	Sale with tax receipt in 240/39 B.C.
S9-359	Se 1	TM 301; TIn 274; TIn 427	Kat 22 (S.E. 99)	At 78	illegible	Sale in 214/3 B.C.
S9-360	Se 1	TM 68; TM 71; TM 172; TM 268; TM 439	Kat 23; Tri 9 (both S.E. 100)	AtT 20; Tk 181; Tk 232; Tk 259; Hm 8	illegible	Sale with tax receipt in 213/2 B.C.
S9-364	Se 3	TIn 165		At 159; Er 61; Tk 231; EkT 56		
S9-365	Se 2					
S9-370	Re 6				SC 3; illegible	

Sealing cat. no. (Messina and Mollo 2004)	Ruler portrait cat. no.	Other possible portraits TM = male head TF = female head Tin = uncertain head	Administrative stamps Alk = salt tax Adk = slave tax Kat = registration Sik = tax on grain sale Tri = sale tax Inc = uncertain	Divinities and heroes	Other devices	Probable nature of document
S9-378	Re 13	TF 169		Nk 6	SC 3; PA 20; Em 45	
S9-381	Al 2			Tk 311	Of 187; FC 1; If 172; M 24	Six-witness contract
S9-441	Dh 1				AR 306; Of 29	
S9-447	La 1	TF 184		AtT 44; Ap 32	AR 27	
S9-469	Se 1	TM 110; TM 300		Hm 8; EkT 64		
S9-470	Se 1	TM 439	Kat 23 (S.E. 100)			Sale in 213/2 B.C.
S9-471	Se 20	TM 496	Kat 19 (S.E. 92)	Hm 18; AtT 2; Ap 97		Sale in 221/0 B.C.
S9-474	Se 1	TM 114	Kat 28 (date unknown)	Tk 89		Sale
S9-475	Se 1				I 179; M 214; Pa 1	
S9-480	Se 1					
S9-490	Se 1			AtT 77		
S9-491	Se 1					
S9-495	Se 1	TM 192; TM 463				
S9-505	Se 1			Er 295; Ap 80		
S9-507	Se 1				Im 18	
S9-508	Se 1				I 106; M 110	
S9-509	Se 1			EKT 53		
S9-514	Se 1				StT 25	
S9-520	Se 1		Tri 11; Inc 6 (date unknown)			Sale tax receipt
S9-521	Se 1		Kat 24 (S.E. 60s)			Sale between 253 and 243 B.C.
S9-523	Se 1		Kat 26; Sik 1 (S.E. 90s)			Sale of grain between 223 and 213 B.C.

Sealing cat. no. (Messina and Mollo 2004)	Ruler portrait cat. no.	Other possible portraits TM = male head TF = female head Tin = uncertain head	Administrative stamps Alk = salt tax Adk = slave tax Kat = registration Sik = tax on grain sale Tri = sale tax Inc = uncertain	Divinities and heroes	Other devices	Probable nature of document
S9-526	Se 1				If 66	
S9-527	Pn 1	TM 468				
S9-528	Se 1		Adk 15 (non exempt); Kat 20 (both S.E. 94)			Slave sale in 219/8 B.C.
S9-529	Se 1		Inc 8 (date unknown)	HmT 62	MO 3	Probably a sale
S9-535	Se 1	TIn 278	Inc 9 (date unknown)	Tk 36; Tk 126; Tk 262		Probably a sale
S9-537	Se 1				Og 15; illegible	
S9-538	Se 1				Em 77; I 234	
S9-540	Se 1; Re 7	TM 303			Pr 5	
S9-545	Se 1		Inc 10 (date unknown)		Og 225; Og 310	Probably a sale
S9-546	Se 1			Tk 89	Ae 2; Of 279	
S9-547	Se 1			HmT 36	Em 32	
S9-548	Se 1	TIn 280	Kat 8; Tri 3 (S.E. 75)			Sale with tax receipt in 238/7 B.C.
S9-549	Se 1			AtT 2; Hm 18	illegible	
S9-552	Se 1		Adk 11 (non exempt); Kat 14; Tri 6 (all S.E. 85)	EkT 86		Slave sale with tax receipt in 228/7 B.C.
S9-553	Se 1		Adk 13 (exempt?); Kat 16; Tri 7 (all S.E. 89)		M 213; illegible	Slave sale with tax receipt in 224/3 B.C.
S9-556	Se 1	TM 2; TIn 273	Adk 16 (exempt?); Kat 21; Tri 8 (all S.E. 95)		Gu 5	Slave sale with tax receipt in 218/7 B.C.
S9-558	Se 1	TM 264				
S9-581	Re 12					
S9-598	Se 49		Inc 11 (date unknown)			Probably a sale
S9-617	Re 11			Tk 199	Of 286	

Table 11. Frequency of sealings impressed with one or more matrices (from Table 10).

Number of matrices on a single sealing	Frequency
1	153
2	29
3	17
4	16
5	9
6	11
7	5
8	1
9	1
10	2
13	1
15	1



Table 12. Frequency of impressions of royal portrait matrices in the archive of Seleukeia on the Tigris.

Royal portrait matrix cat. no. (Messina and Mollo 2004)	Frequency of impression	Administrative office
Se 1	49	<i>chreophylakes</i> (inscribed)
Se 2	36	<i>chreophylakes?</i>
Se 32	31	important office?
Se 47	14	important office?
Se 5	7	
Se 34	6	
Se 51	5	
Ca 1	4	
Se 3	4	<i>chreophylakes</i> (inscribed)
La 1	2	
La 3	2	
Re 31	2	
Se 18	2	
Se 19	2	
Se 43	2	
Se 49	2	
Se 7	2	<i>chreophylakes</i> (inscribed)
78 remaining matrices	1	

PLATE 1



1



2

1. Panel painting with a family portrait of the Roman emperor Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, and their sons Geta (struck by *damnatio memoriae*) and Caracalla, ca. A.D. 200. Tempera on wood, 30.5 cm (diam.). Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. 31329.

2. Photographic family portrait of US President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, and their daughters Sasha and Malia, by Kwaku Alston, ca. 2010.

PLATE 2



1



2



3

1. Cameo with the horned portrait of Alexander the Great in a Renaissance setting. Sardonyx, 3.2 x 3 cm. Cabinet des médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, inv. Camée 222.

2. Intaglio with a female head. Glass, 2.6 x 1.9 x 0.3 cm. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. FG 1097.

3. Sealing impressed with a male portrait, from Delos. Clay. Excavations of the French School at Athens.

PLATE 3



Sealings *in situ* during their excavation at Delos.

PLATE 4



Phiale with Nilotic scene known as Tazza Farnese, 1st century B.C. (?). Sardonyx, 21.7 cm (diam.). Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, inv. 27611.

PLATE 5



1



2

1. Drawing after the Tazza Farnese, attributed to Muhammed al-Khayyam, before 1433. Black ink on paper, 18.6 x 18.6 cm (sheet). Staatsbibliothek, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung, Berlin, ms. Diez A fol. 72.
2. Intaglio with Neanthos attacked by dogs, signed "of Apollonides," ca. 1815-1829. Carnelian, 3.5 cm (width). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. 95.86.

PLATE 6



Fronispiece of *Abrahami Gorlaei Antverpiani dactyliotheca* showing Abraham van Goorle with his gem collection, 1601.

PLATE 7



Two volumes of Lippert's *Dactyliotheca universalis signorum*, 1755. Lübeck, St. Annen Museum.



PLATE 8



1



2

1. Cameo with a bust identified as Ptolemaios VIII by Marie-Louise Vollenweider. Sardonyx, 1.7 x 1.3 cm. Cabinet des médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, De Clercq collection, no. 2414.

2. Tetradrachm minted under the authority of Ptolemaios VIII. Cabinet des médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, inv. M 7530.

PLATE 9



1



2

1. Octadrachm with a portrait of Ptolemaios III minted under the authority of Ptolemaios IV. Numismatic Museum, Athens.

2. Intaglio with a bust identified as Ptolemaios III by Marie-Louise Vollenweider. Carnelian, 1.9 x 1.5 x 0.3 cm. Cabinet des médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, don du duc de Luynes, no. 59.

PLATE 10



1



a



b



c



d

2

1. Sealing with a portrait identified as Seleukos IV by Marie-Louise Vollenweider. Clay, 2.1 cm (height). Cabinet des médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Henri Seyrig collection.

2. Four tetradrachms minted under the authority of Seleukos IV at Antiocheia on the Orontes (a, b), Susa (c), and an uncertain mint (d). Cabinet des médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, inv. 1966.453.2954; Fouilles de Suse 530; Fouilles de Suse 46; R 3684.

PLATE 11



E



D



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C



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B



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A

PLATE 12



Se 1(A): S9-347



Se 1(B): S9-358



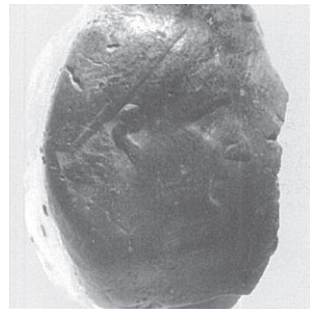
Se 2(A): S7-2255



Se 2(B): S7-4925



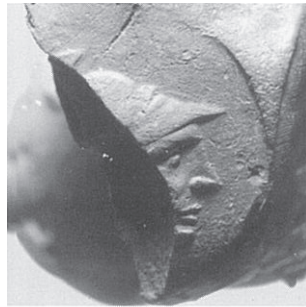
Se 3: S9-364



Se 4: S9-319



Se 5: S7-4669



Se 6: S-3975



Se 7(A): S7-4661



Se 7(B): S7-4661



Se 8: S7-4680



Se 9: S7-6931

PLATE 13



Se 10: S6-10023



Se 11: S6-3903



Se 12: S7-6932



Se 13: S7-3339



Se 14: S-9744



Se 15: S6-1398



Se 16: S7-4049



Se 17: S6-4712



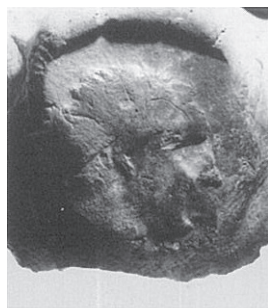
Se 18(A): S6-1465



Se 18(B): S6-1679



Se 19: S6-1063



Se 20: S9-471

PLATE 14



Se 21: S6-5429



Se 22: S6-9919



Se 23: S-3265



Se 24: S7-4101



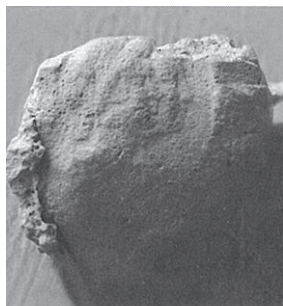
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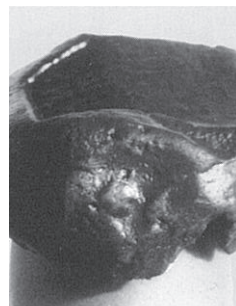
Se 26: S-4460



Se 27: S-6089



Se 28: S7-3683



Se 29: S6-8331



Se 30: S7-3331



Se 31: S7-3330



Se 32: S6-782

PLATE 15



Se 33: S7-2860



Se 34(A): S7-4039



Se 34(B): S7-4038



Se 35: S7-4045



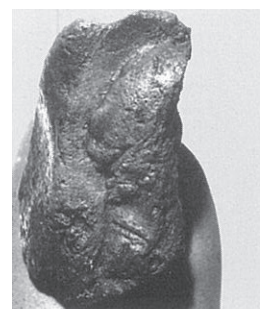
Se 36: S7-4873



Se 37(B): S6-984



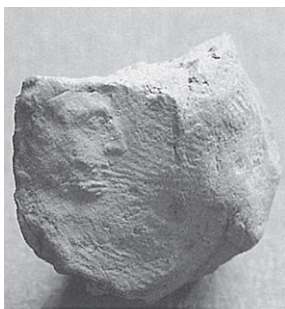
Se 38: S7-4067



Se 39: S7-6435



Se 40(A): S6-1184



Se 41: S6-9894



Se 42: S7-3633



Se 43: S7-6815



PLATE 16



Se 44: S7-4041



Se 45: S7-4034



Se 46: S7-4040



Se 47(A): S6-1674



Se 47(B): S6-4649



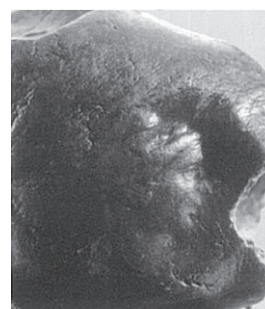
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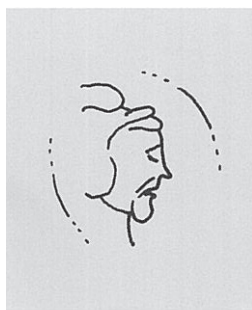
Se 48(B): S7-4058



Se 49: S6-12766



Se 50(A): S8-282



Se 50(B): S8-282



Se 51(A): S7-4689



Se 51(B): S7-4694

PLATE 17

**Seleukos I Nikator**



SC 173.1

**Posthumous**



SC 471



SC 322



SC 323.1b

**Antiochos I Soter**



SC 426



SC 324



SC 335.1



SC 378.1

**Antiochos II Theos**



SC 519



SC 571.1

**Seleukos II Kallinikos**



SC 689.1



SC 654.1

**Seleukos III Keraunos**



SC 921.1

**Antiochos III Megas**



SC 1041.1



SC 1043.1



SC 1039

PLATE 18

**Molon**



SC 950

**Achaios**



SC 953.1

**Seleukos IV Philopator**



SC 1313.1

**Antiochos, son of Seleukos IV**



SC 1368



SC 1369

**Antiochos IV Epiphanes**



SC 1395.1



SC 1472

**Antiochos V Eupator**



SC 1575.1



SC 1581

**Demetrios I Soter**



SC 1634



SC 1686

**Timarchos**



SC 1589

PLATE 19

**Alexander I Balas**



SC 1781



SC 1841

**Demetrios II Nikator**

first reign



SC 1906

second reign



SC 2164

**Antiochos VI Dionysos**



SC 2009.1



SC 2000

**Tryphon**



SC 2029

**Antiochos VII Sidetes**



SC 2075

PLATE 20



AtT 16: S7-4499



AtT 20(A): S9-360



AtT 18: S6-858



AtT 50: S9-307

1



2

1. Sealings impressed with a female head identified as Athena, from Seleukeia on the Tigris. Excavations of the University of Turin, inv. S7-4499, S9-360, S6-858, S9-307.

2. Sealing with a portrait of Demetrios I. Clay, 2.3 x 1.7 cm. Bode Museum, Berlin, inv. VA 6172.

PLATE 21



Coins minted under the authority of Antiochos II.

PLATE 22



Portrait head of Antiochos IV. Marble, 24.3 cm (height). Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. 1975.5.

PLATE 23



1



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No image rights

No image rights

3

4

1. Sealing with a portrait of Antiochos IV, from Seleukeia on the Tigris. Excavations of the University of Turin, inv. S6-1184.

2. Sealing with a portrait of Antiochos IV, from Uruk. Royal Museums of Brussels, inv. O 207.

3. Sealing with a portrait of Antiochos IV, from Kedesch. Excavations of the University of Michigan and University of Minnesota, inv. K 00 0212.

4. Sealing with a portrait of Antiochos IV, from Kedesch. Excavations of the University of Michigan and University of Minnesota, inv. K 99 0047.



PLATE 24

No image rights

1



2

1. Sealing with a portrait of Antiochos III. Excavations of the University of Michigan and University of Minnesota, inv. K 00 0076.

2. Intaglio with a portrait of Antiochos III, signed "Apollonios [made me]," and its impression (right). Garnet, 1.9 cm (preserved height). Numismatic Museum, Athens, inv. 594.

PLATE 25



Portrait statue of Demosthenes, copy after a bronze original by Polyeuktos of Athens ca. 280 B.C. Marble, 2.02 m (height). Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, inv. 2782.

PLATE 26



1



2

1. Portrait bust of Seleukos I, copy after an original perhaps by Bryaxis ca. 300-280 B.C, found in the Villa dei Papiri, Herculaneum. Bronze, 56 cm (height). Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, inv. 5590.

2. Sealing with a horned portrait of Seleukos I, from Seleukeia on the Tigris. Excavations of the University of Turin, inv. S9-347.

PLATE 27



1



2

1. Intaglio with a portrait of an Eastern ruler, and its impression (right). Chalcedony, 2.5 x 2.1 cm. British Museum, London, inv. 1910,0614.1.

2. Sealing impressed with a female head, from Seleukeia on the Tigris. Excavations of the University of Turin, inv. S9-277.

PLATE 28



Sealing impressed with a male head, from Seleukeia on the Tigris. Excavations of the University of Turin, inv. S7-2140.

PLATE 29



Intaglio with Alexander Keraunophoros, inscribed "of Neisos." Carnelian, 3 x 2.1 cm. State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, inv. Ж 609.

PLATE 30



Intaglio with the bust of a Ptolemaic queen, signed “Nikandros made [me].” Garnet, 2.6 x 2.6 x 1.2 cm. Walters Museum, Baltimore, inv. 42.1339.

PLATE 31



Intaglio with the bust of a Ptolemaic queen, and its impression (below). Carnelian, 3 x 2 cm. State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, inv. Ж 615.



PLATE 32



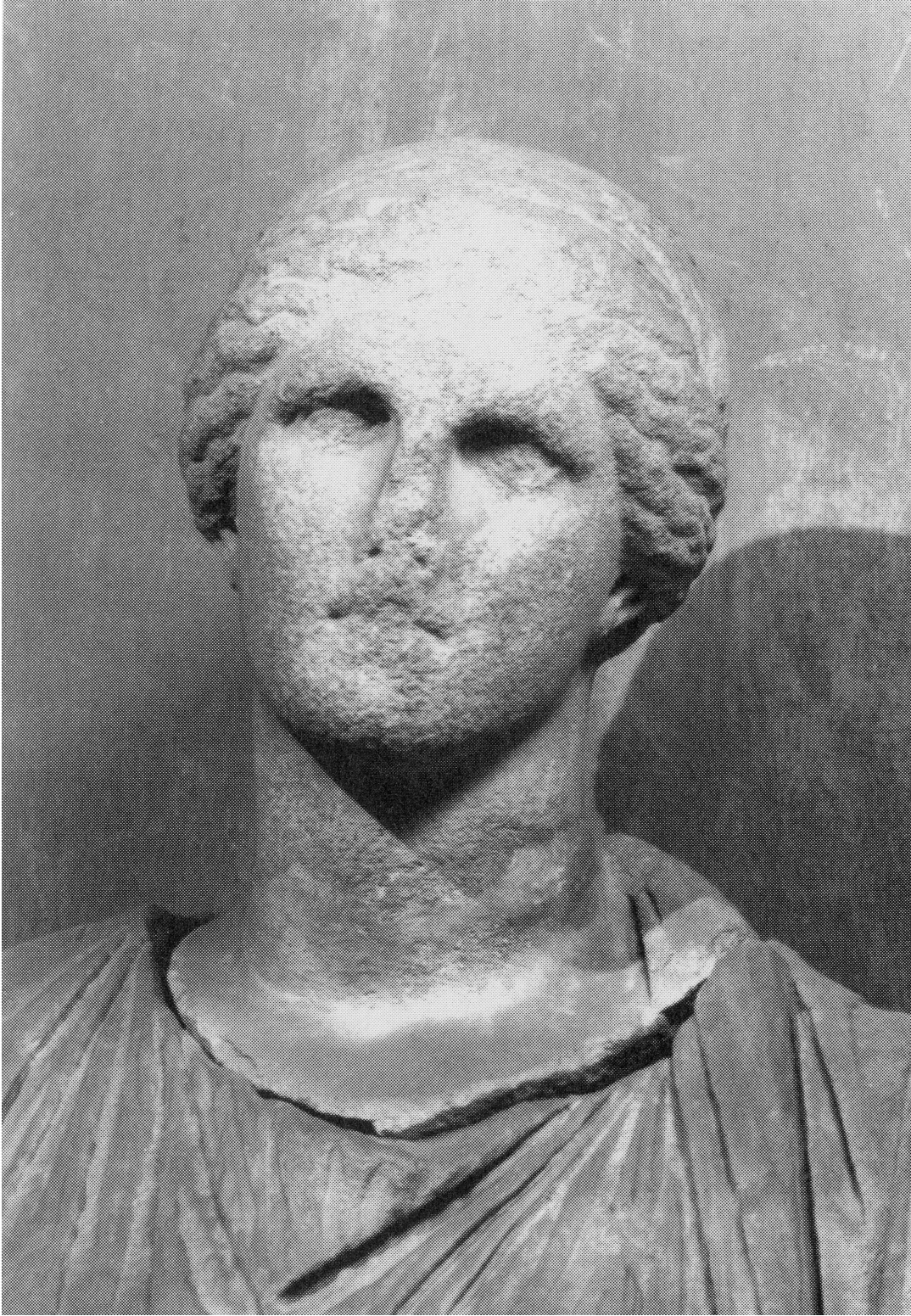
Intaglio with the head of a Ptolemaic queen, and its impression (below). Garnet, 0.8 x 1.3 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. 27.709.

PLATE 33



Intaglio with the head of a Ptolemaic queen. Chalcedony, 2.1 x 1.9 x 0.3 cm. Cabinet des médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, inv. 2319.

PLATE 34



Head of "Statue C," from the Sanctuary of Artemis Polo at Thasos, 2nd-1st century B.C.. Marble, 2.03 m (height of statue). Archaeological Museum, Istanbul, inv. 2154.

PLATE 35



1



2

1. Intaglio with the portrait of Ptolemaios II, from Kafr-es-Sheikh, and its impression (right). Amethyst, 2.5 x 1.7 x 1 cm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, inv. 1892.1503.

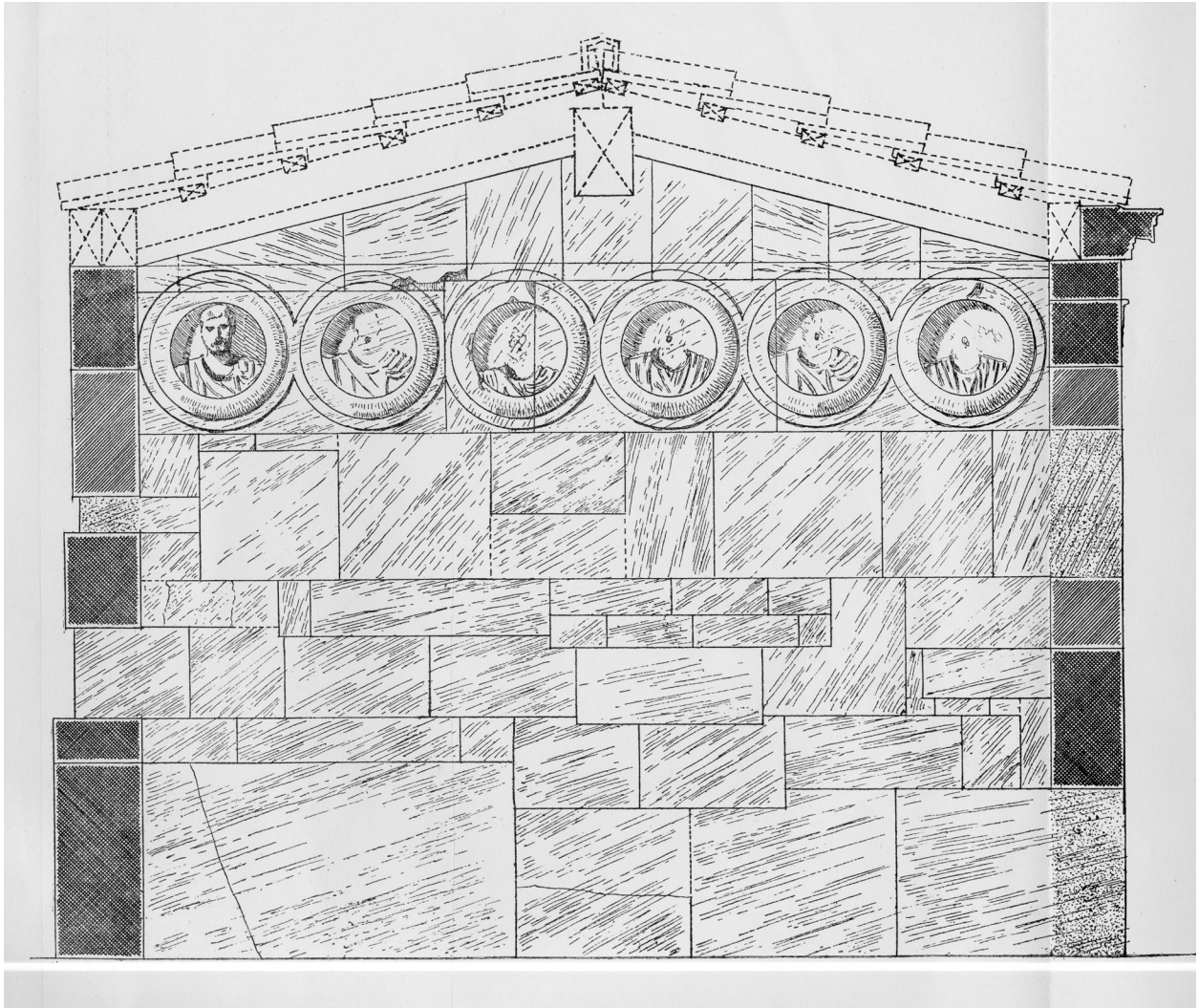
2. Octadrachm with the jugate portraits of Ptolemaios II and Arsinoe II on the obverse and of Ptolemaios I and Berenike I on the reverse, minted at Alexandria under the authority of Ptolemaios II, ca. 250 B.C. Cabinet des médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, inv. Svoronos 603.

PLATE 36



Statue of a Roman general known as “Tivoli General,” late 2nd-early 1st century B.C., from the sanctuary of Hercules Victor at Tivoli. Marble, 1.94 m (height). Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, inv. 106513.

PLATE 37



Reconstruction of the interior back wall of the Monument of Mithridates at Delos.

PLATE 38



Fulcrum attachment with a possible bust of Arsinoe III, from the Antikythera shipwreck. Bronze, 7.5 cm (height). National Museum, Athens, inv. 15099.

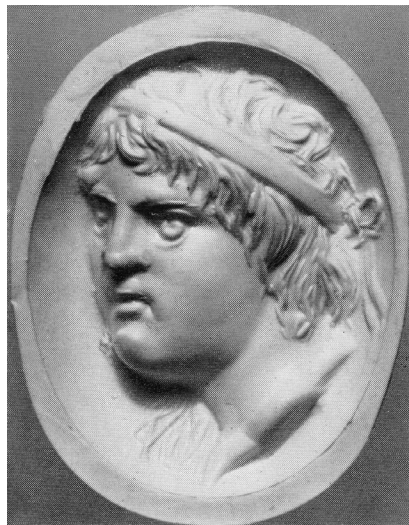
PLATE 39



1. Sealing impressed with a male head, from Seleukeia on the Tigris. Excavations of the University of Turin, inv. S7-2015.



PLATE 40



Intaglio with the bust of a king, possibly Ptolemaios III. Amethyst, 1.8 x 1.5 x 0.6 cm. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. 1967.8.

PLATE 41



1



2

1. Sealing with the bust of a Ptolemaic king, possibly Ptolemaios X, from Edfu. Clay, 2 cm (height). Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Milne no. 95.

2. Sealing with the bust of a Ptolemaic king, possibly Ptolemaios X, from Paphos. Clay, 1.8 x 1.4 cm. Cyprus Museum, Nicosia, inv. 2743.

PLATE 42



Intaglio with a bust of Athena, signed “Eutyches, son of Dioskourides, the Aeginetan, made [me],” and its impression (below). Rock crystal, 3.7 x 2.9 x 1.4 cm. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. FG 2305.

PLATE 43



1



2

1. Intaglio with the head of the dog star Sirius, signed "Gaios made [me]," and its impression (right). Garnet, 2.1 x 1.5 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. 27.734.

2. Intaglio with a female head. Glass, 2.4 x 1.9 cm. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. 30219,253.

PLATE 44



1



2

1. Intaglio with the bust of Serapis. Carnelian, 2.2 x 1.6 x 0.5 cm. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. FG 1105.

2. Intaglio with the bust of an Eastern ruler. Garnet, 2.7 cm (height). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. 27.710.

PLATE 45



1



2

1. Gorgo falls while her sisters pursue Perseus, detail of an Attic black-figure dinos, name piece of the Gorgon painter, ca. 580 B.C. Terracotta, 93 cm (height of vessel). Louvre, Paris, inv. E 874.

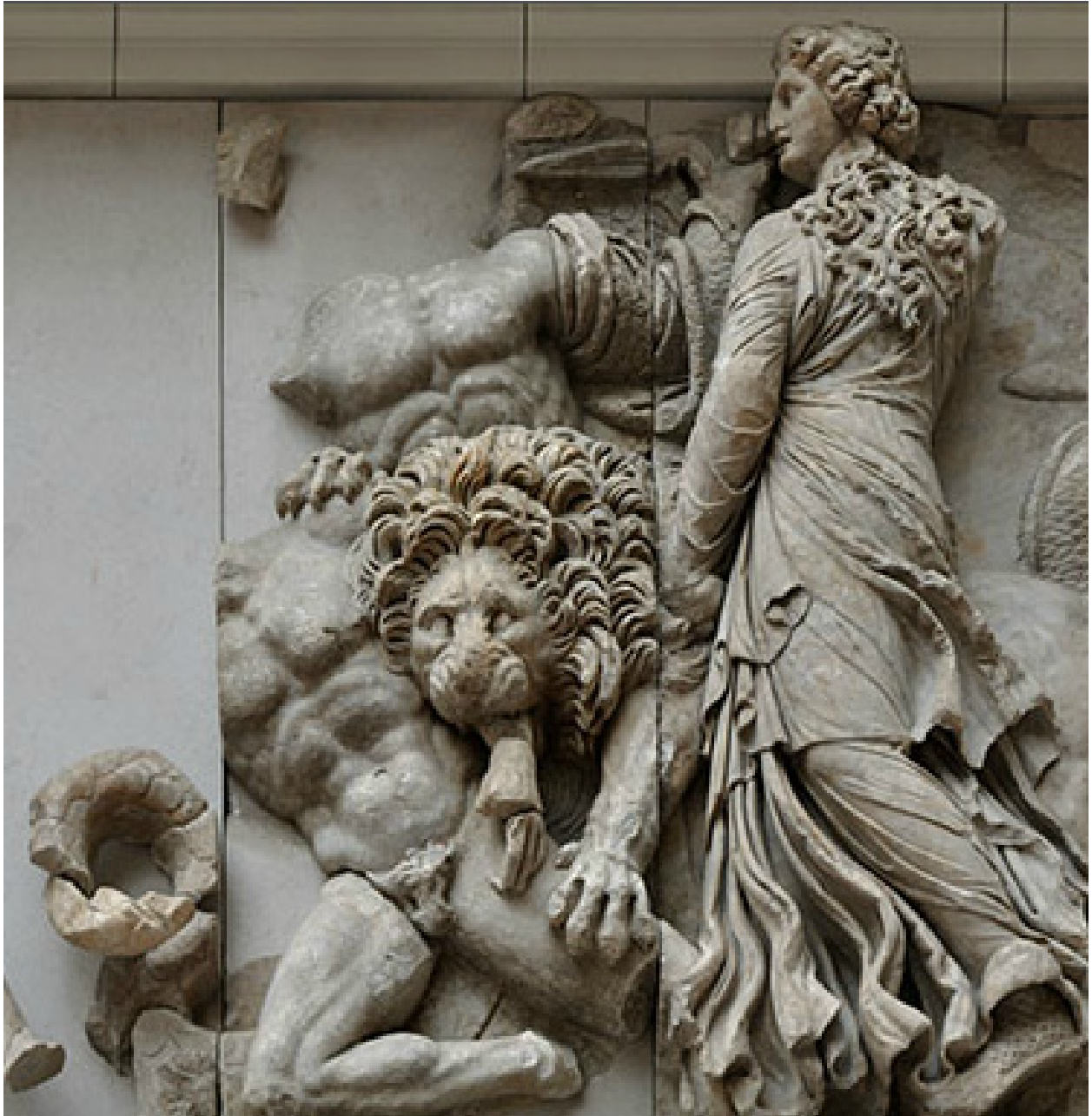
2. Fallen warrior, detail of an Attic red-figure kylix, attributed to Douris, ca. 500-450 B.C. Terracotta. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. F2288.

PLATE 46



Athena holding by the hair the fallen Giant Alkyoneus, detail of the East Frieze of the Great Altar of Pergamon, 2nd century B.C. Marble, 2.11 m (height). Pergamon Museum, Berlin.

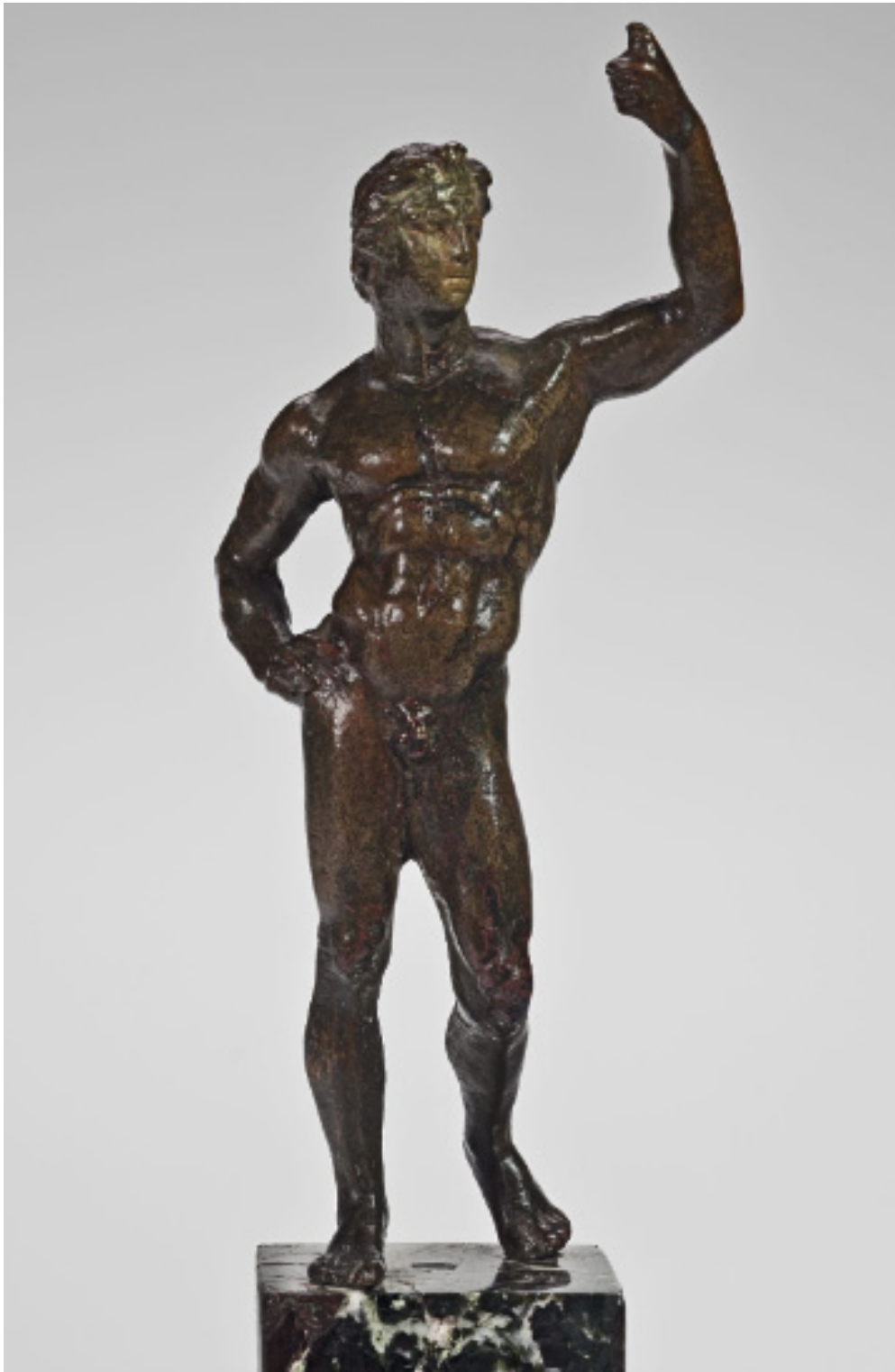
PLATE 47



Lion attacking a fallen Giant, detail of the North Frieze of the Great Altar of Pergamon, 2nd century B.C. Marble, 2.11 m (height). Pergamon Museum, Berlin.

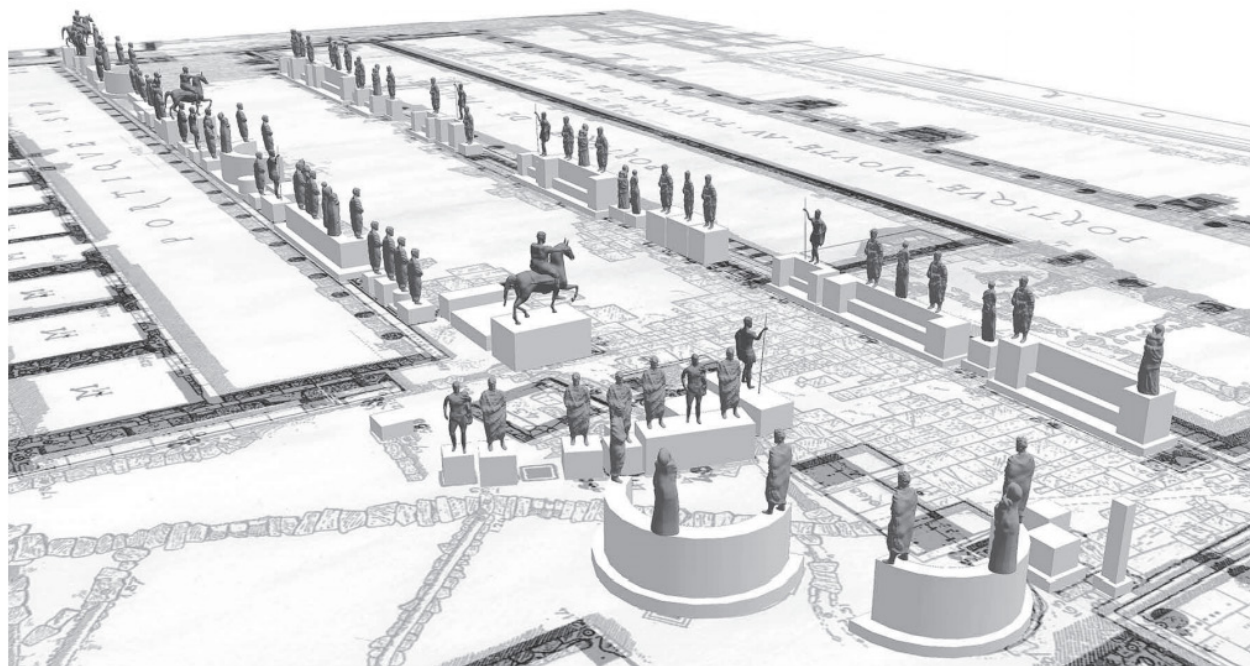


PLATE 48



Statuette of Alexander the Great, known as "Nelidow Alexander," copy after a lifesize statue, probably by Lysippos, ca. 325 B.C. Bronze, 12.1 cm (height). Harvard Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Cambridge, MA, inv. 1956.20.

PLATE 49



1



Intaglio

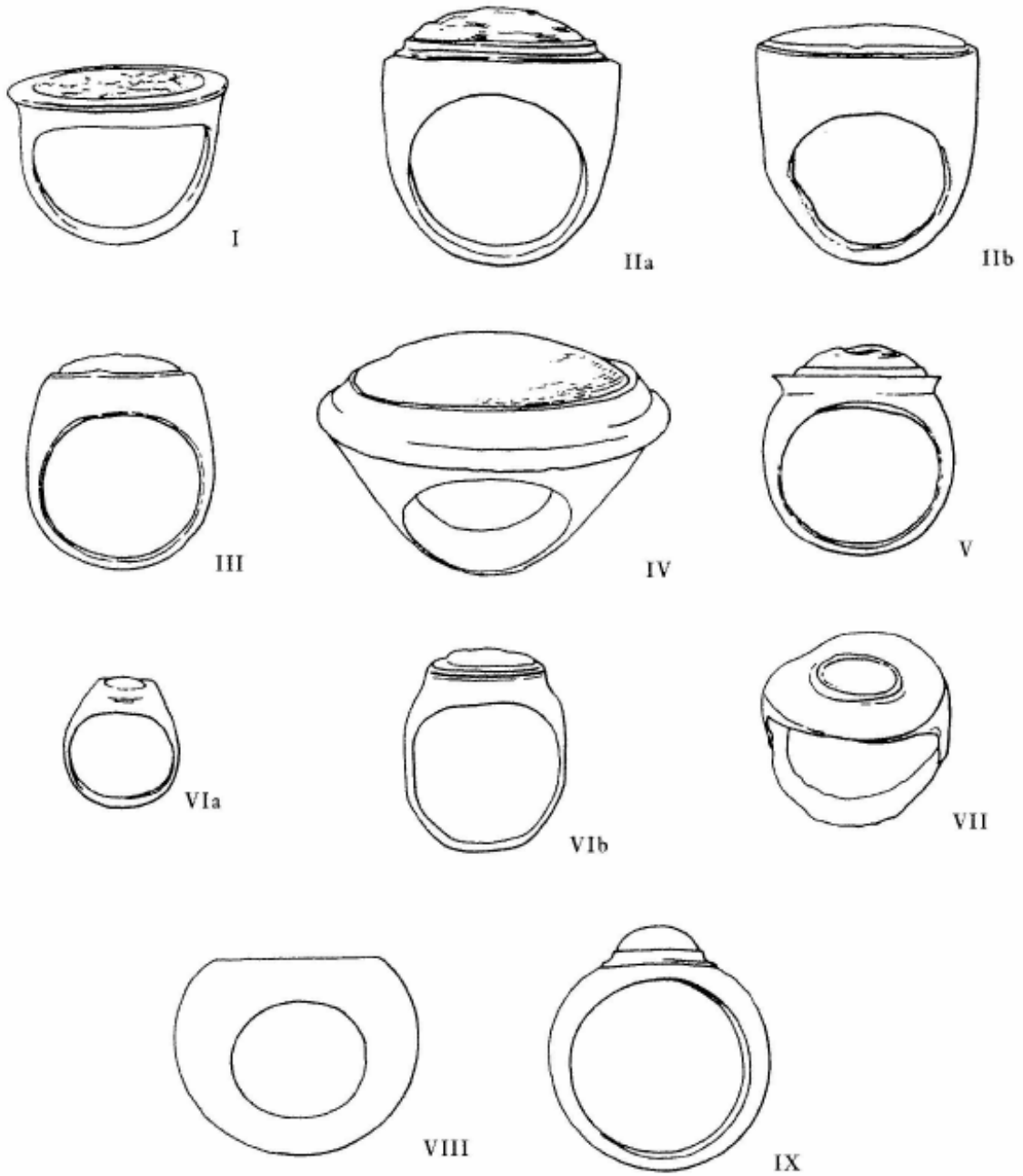


Cameo

2

1. SketchUp reconstruction of the Dromos at Delos, ca. 180 B.C.
2. Section of an intaglio (top) and cameo (bottom) showing a frontal head.

PLATE 50



Hellenistic ring shapes.

PLATE 51



1



2

1. Swivel ring with a scarab, ca. 500-475 B.C. Gold and carnelian, 1.3 cm (height of scarab). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. 21.1201.

2. Front and back of an Etruscan pseudo-scarab, 500-480 B.C. Banded agate, 1 x 1.2 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. 27.719.

PLATE 52



Group of Ptolemaic cameos. Cabinet des médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, inv. Camée 144 (1); British Museum, London, inv. 1923,0401.1074 (2); Content Family Collection (3); Museum of London, inv. A 14271 (4); State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, inv. K35 (5); State Museum of Georgia, Tbilisi (6).

PLATE 53



Fragmentary cameo with the head of a Ptolemaic queen in a modern mount. Sardonyx, 4.9 x 4 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. 23.592.

PLATE 54



1



2

1. Head, possibly of a Ptolemaic queen. Garnet, 1.5 cm (preserved height). Michael C. Carlos Museum, Atlanta, inv. 2002.4.1.

2. Two rings with the head of Athena, 3rd century B.C, found in the Pantikapaion necropolis. Gold and garnet, 4.8 cm and 5.4 cm (bezel height). State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, inv. П.1838.15-16.

PLATE 55



1



2

1. Intaglio with the head of a Ptolemaic queen. Glass, 2 cm (diam.). British Museum, London, inv. 1923,0401.147.  
2. Intaglio with the head of a Ptolemaic queen. Glass, 2.2 x 2 x 0.5 cm. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. FG 1093.



PLATE 56



Cameo with the bust of Isis or assimilated Ptolemaic queen. Sardonyx, 2.3 x 1.4 cm. State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, inv. F 310.

PLATE 57



1

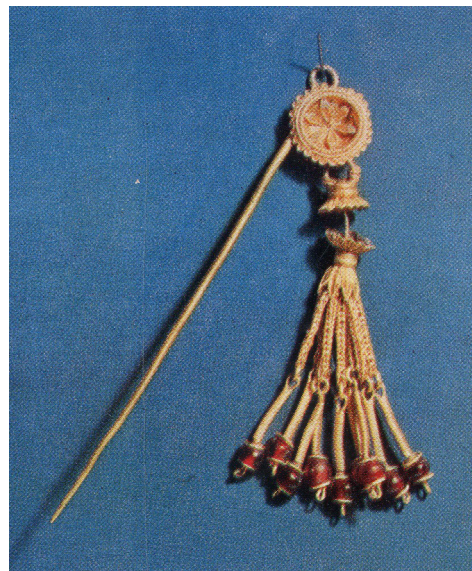


2

1. Intaglio with the horned portrait of Alexander the Great. Tourmaline, 2.5 cm (diam.). Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, inv. 892.1499.

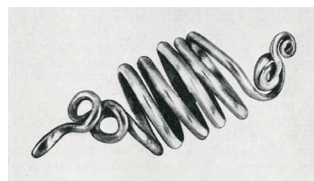
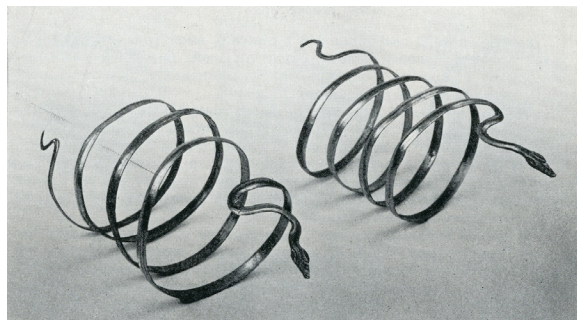
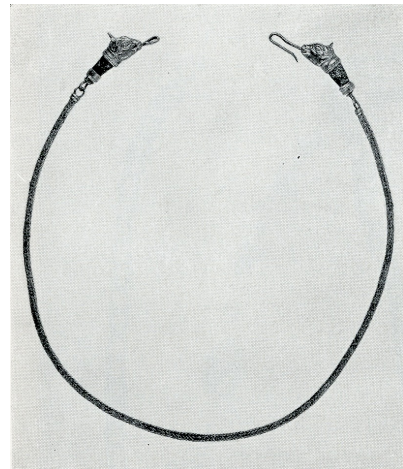
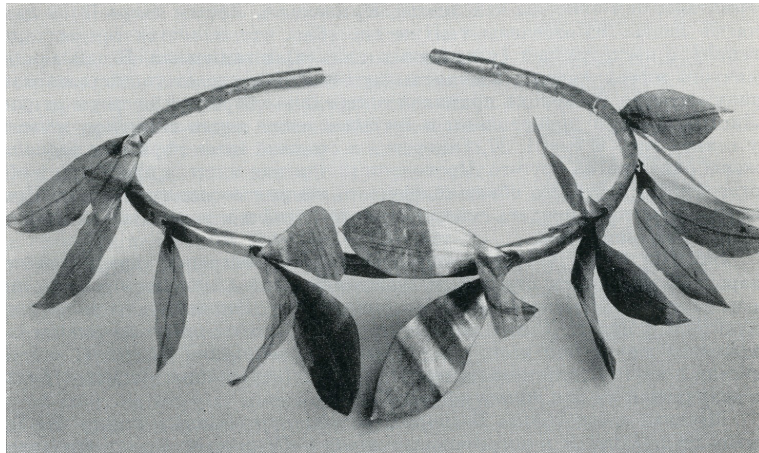
2. Intaglio with the head of a Ptolemaic king, 1st century B.C., found in Wroxeter in a 3rd century A.D. context. Sardonyx, 1.4 x 1.1 cm.

PLATE 58



Part of a jewelry set discovered with the female burial in Tomb II of the Artyukov Barrow, Crimea. State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, inv. Art. 38, 39, 40, 44, 52, 53 (from left to right and top to bottom).

PLATE 59



Part of a jewelry set discovered with the female burial in Tomb II of the Artyukov Barrow, Crimea. State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, inv. Art. 37, 46, 43, 48, 49, 57 (from left to right and top to bottom).

PLATE 60



Ring and cameo with Eros chasing a butterfly, 2nd century B.C. or earlier, found in Tomb II of the Artyukov Barrow, Crimea. Sardonyx and gold, 2.7 x 2.5 cm (bezel). State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, inv. Art. 55.

PLATE 61



Ring and intaglio with the head of a woman, said to have been found at the Rosetta Gate, Alexandria. Glass and limestone, 3.3 x 2 cm (bezel). British Museum, London, inv. 1917,0501.1615.

PLATE 62

*P. Eleph. 1*



1



2

sealing a



3



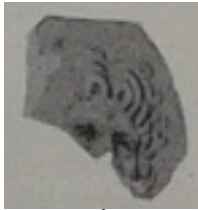
4

sealing b

*P. Eleph. 2*



5



6



7

sealing a



8



9



10

sealing b



11



12



13



14



15

sealing c

*P. Eleph. 3*



16



17

sealing a



18



19



20

sealing b

*P. Eleph. 4*



21



22

sealing a



23



24



25

sealing b



26



27



28

sealing c

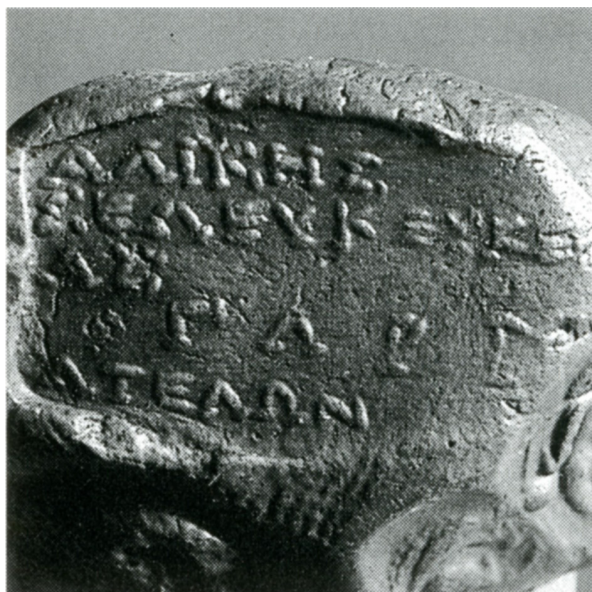


29

PLATE 63



1



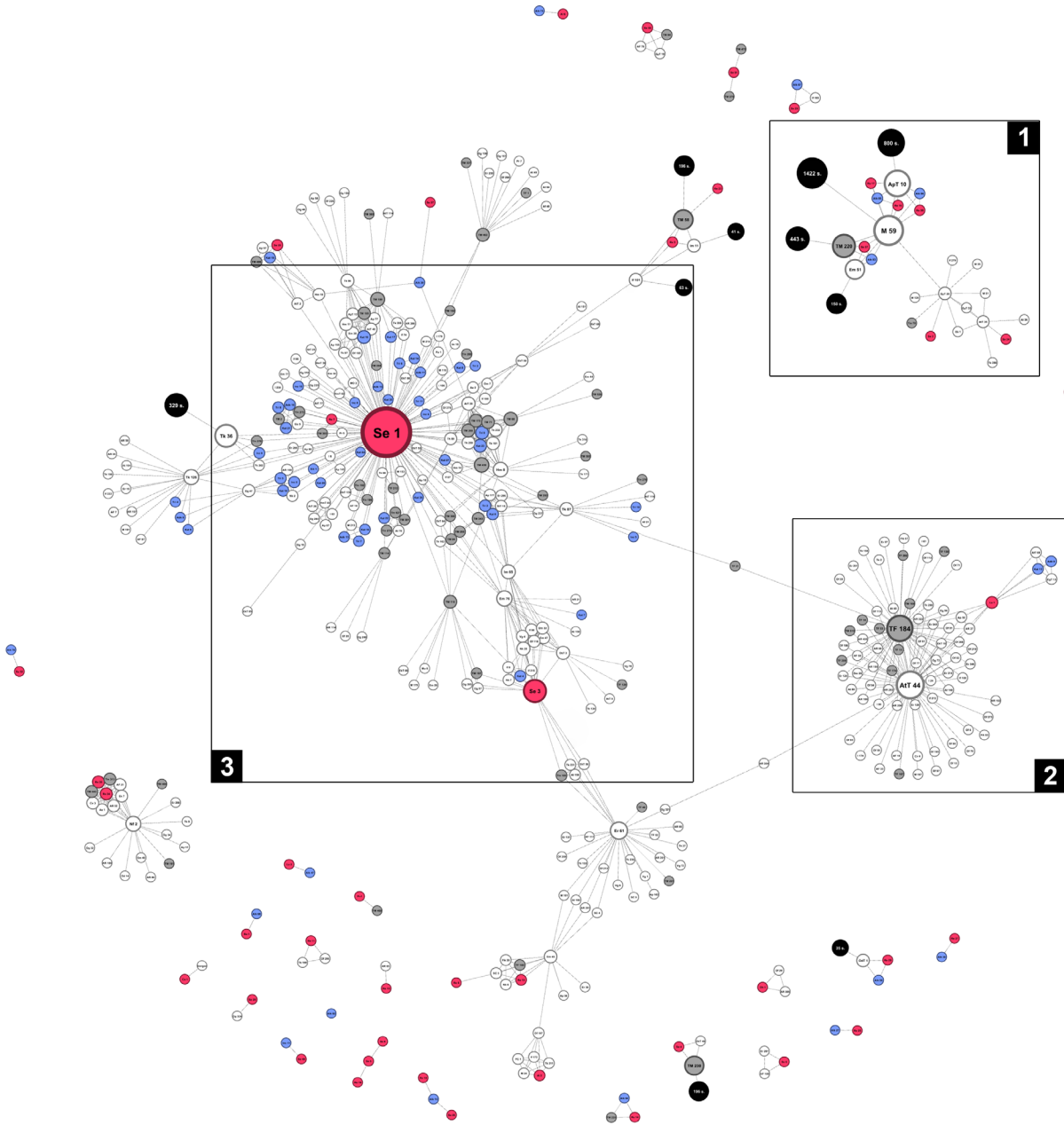
2

1. Sealing impressed with an eagle holding a thunderbold in his talons, found on a royal ordinance by Ptolemaios X Alexandros (*UPZI* 106). Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden, inv. AMS 6-a.

2. Sealing impressed with an administrative stamp, inscribed “of the salt tax [office] of Seleukeia, 133, exempt,” from Seleukeia on the Tigris. Excavations of the University of Turin, inv. S7-3907.



PLATE 64



Gephi visualization of the network of matrices from Seleukeia on the Tigris.

PLATE 65



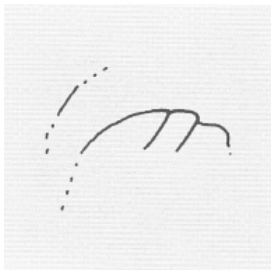
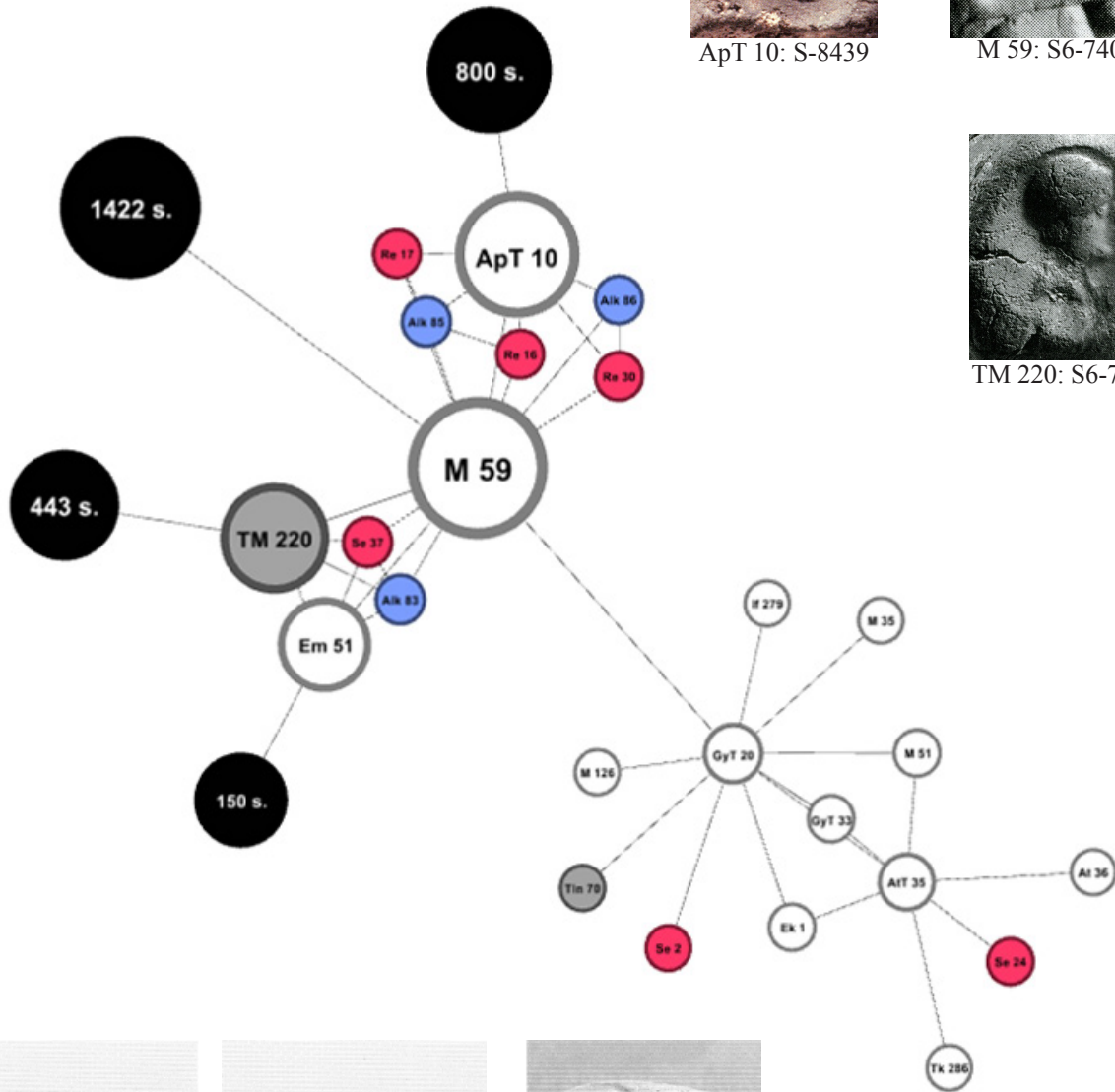
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M 59: S6-7409



TM 220: S6-7253



Re 16: S6-6366



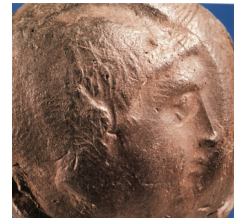
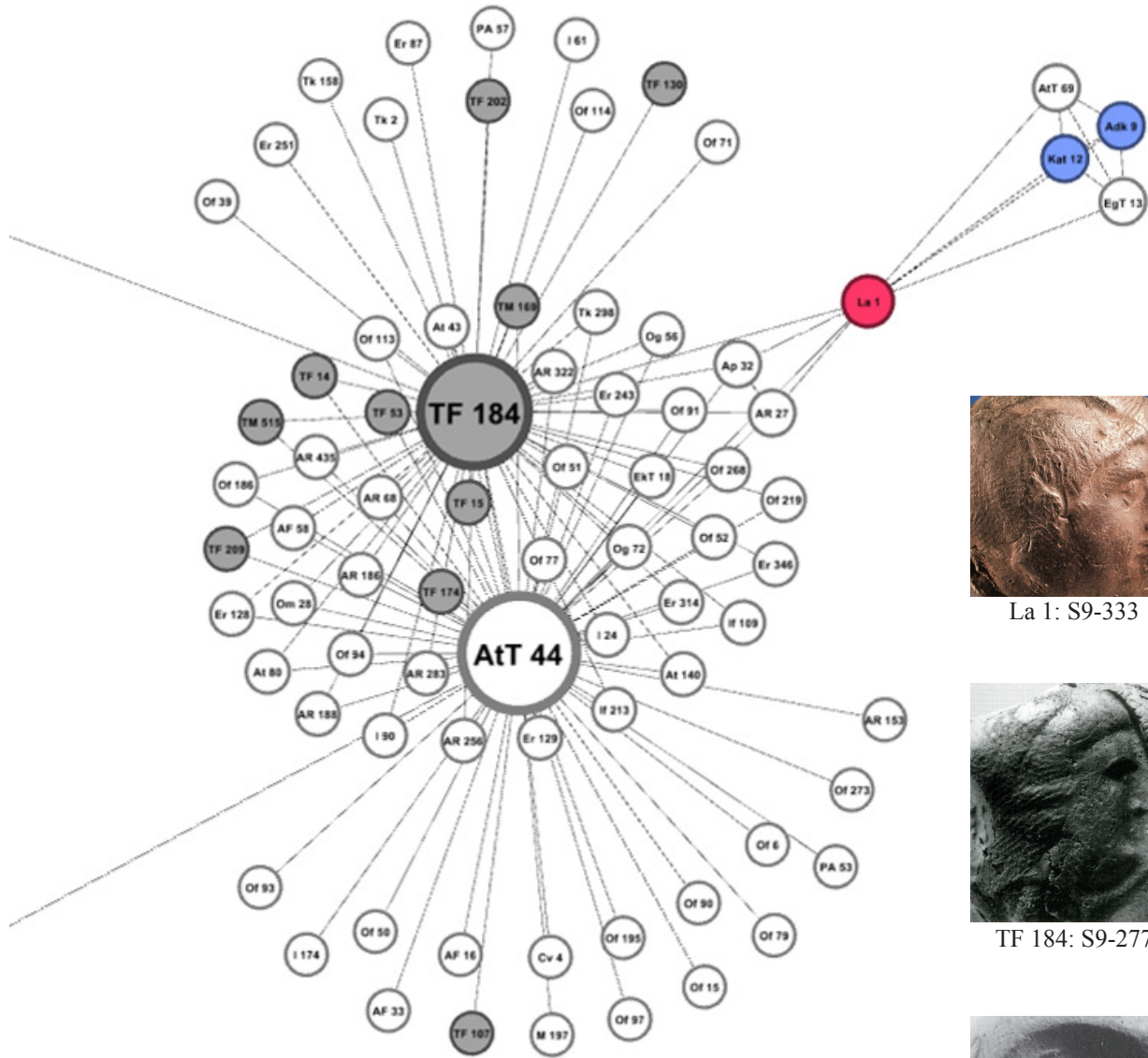
Re 17: S6-6504



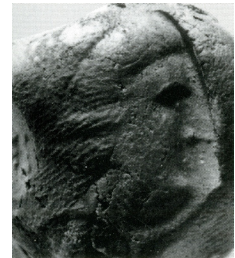
Se 37: S6-984

Detail 1 from the network visualization.

PLATE 66



La 1: S9-333



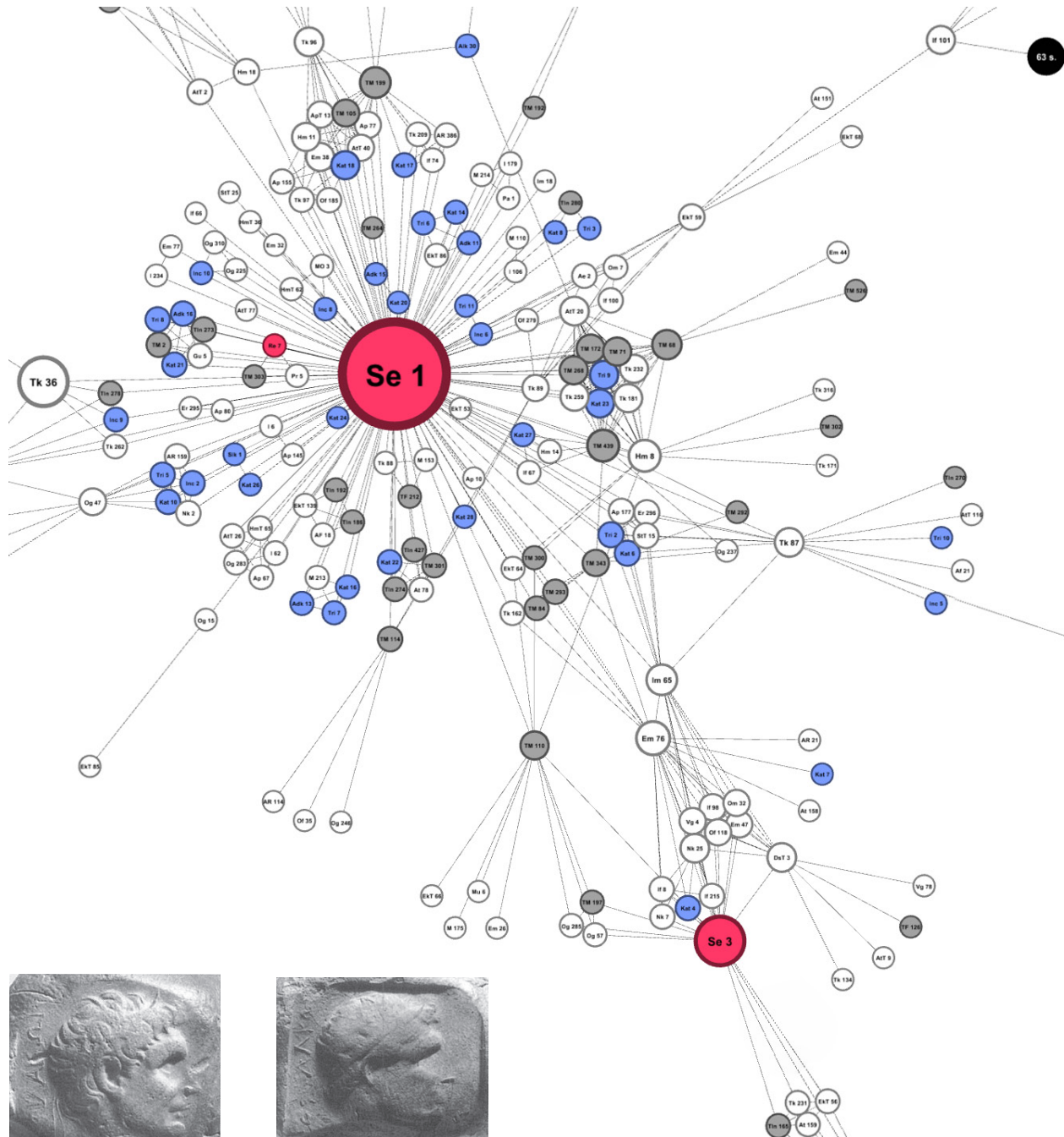
TF 184: S9-277



AtT 44: S9-277

Detail 2 from the network visualization

PLATE 67



Se 1: S9-347



Se 3: S9-364

Detail 3 from the network visualization.

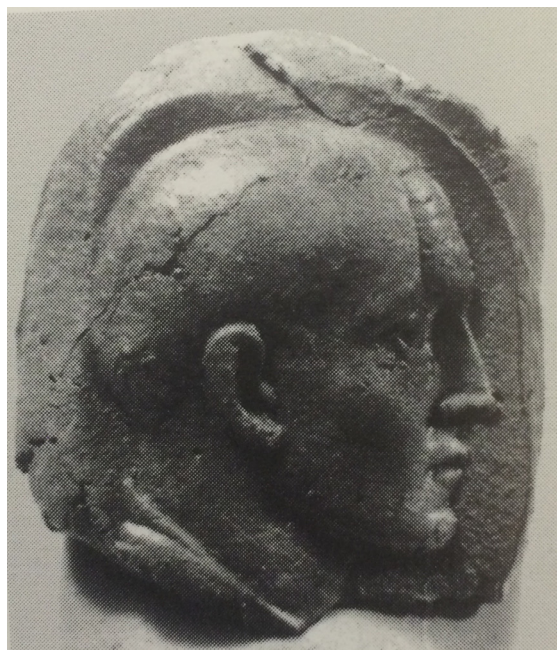
PLATE 68



1



2



3



4

1. Sealing impressed with a male bust, inscribed ΔΙΟΦΑΝ[.], from Seleukeia on the Tigris. Excavations of the University of Turin, inv. S7-2497.

2. Sealing impressed with a male head, from Seleukeia on the Tigris. Excavations of the University of Turin, inv. S6-6019.

3-4. Sealings impressed with a male head, from Seleukeia on the Tigris. Excavations of the University of Turin, inv. S7-2813 and S7-2895.

PLATE 69



1



2



3



4

1. Sealing impressed with the seal of the *chreophylakes* of Seleukeia on the Tigris. Excavations of the University of Turin, inv. S9.347.
2. Sealing impressed with the seal of the *chreophylakes* of Uruk. Bode Museum, Berlin, inv. VA 6160.
3. Sealing impressed with the seal of the *bibliophylakes* of Seleukeia on the Tigris. Excavations of the University of Turin, inv. S7-4053.
4. Sealing impressed with the seal of the *bibliophylakes* of Uruk.

PLATE 70



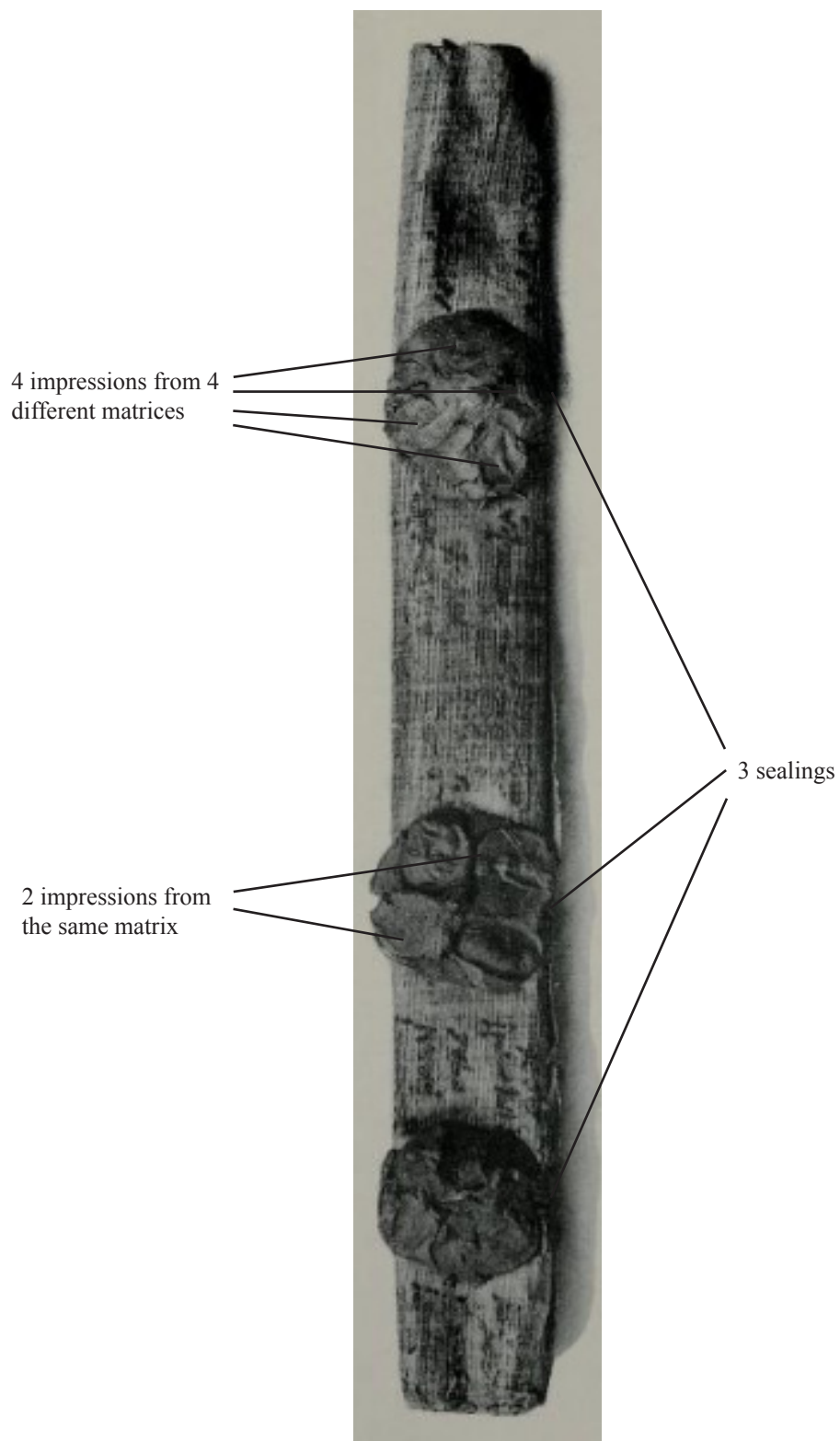
1



2

1. Cuneiform tablet impressed with a portrait of Antiochos IV (left) and a private male portrait (right), from Uruk. Clay, 9 x 10.8 x 2.8 cm. MacKenzie Art Gallery, University of Regina, Saskatchewan, inv. 1983-031-080.
2. Sealing attached to a papyrus found at Arsinoites (*P. Col.* II 122). Columbia University, New York, inv. P. 204.

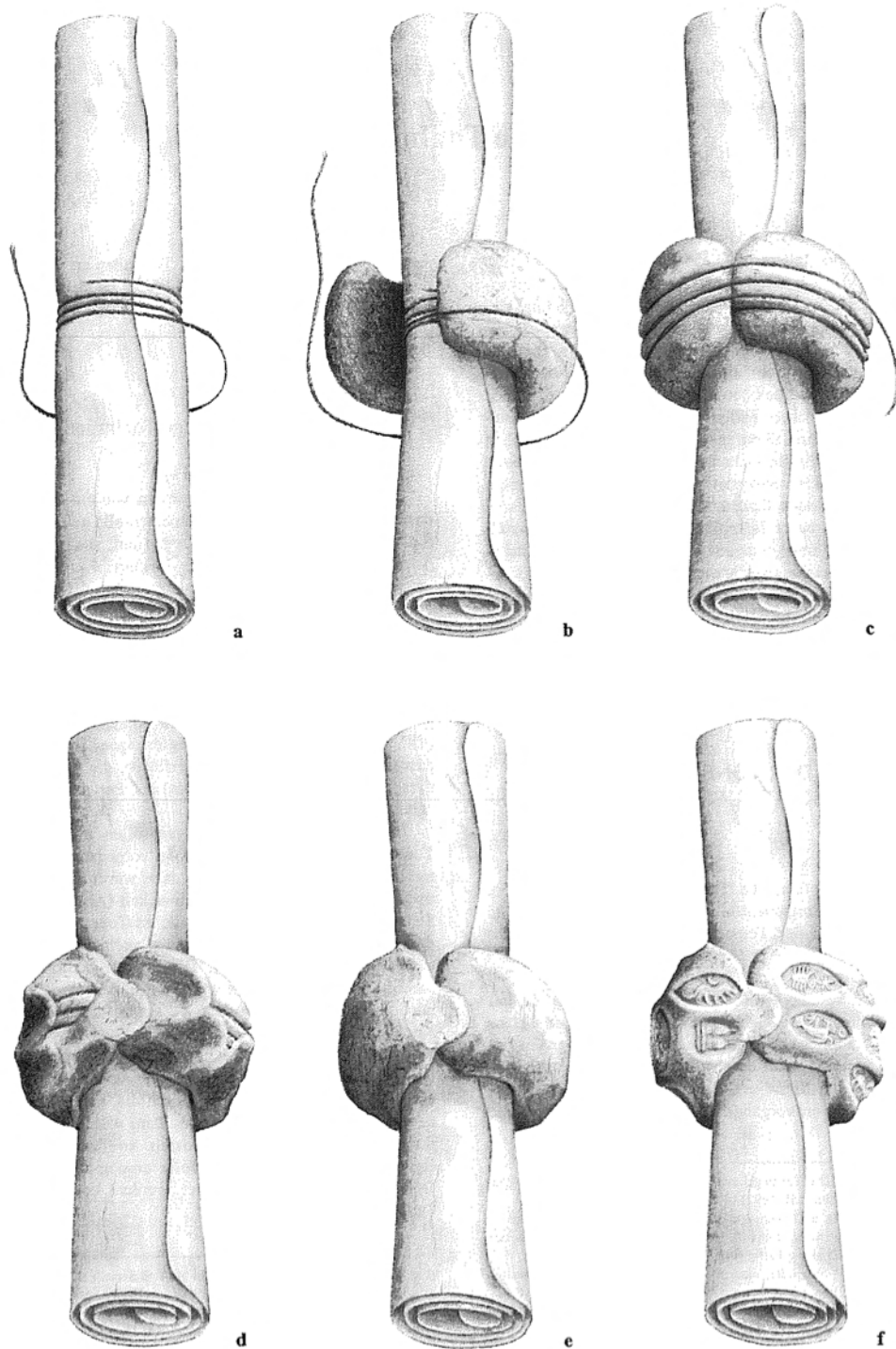
PLATE 71



Papyrus (*P. Eleph. 2*) with its sealings still attached, 284 B.C., from Elephantine. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. P. 13501.

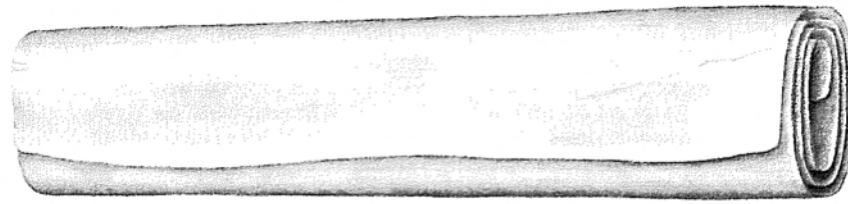


PLATE 72

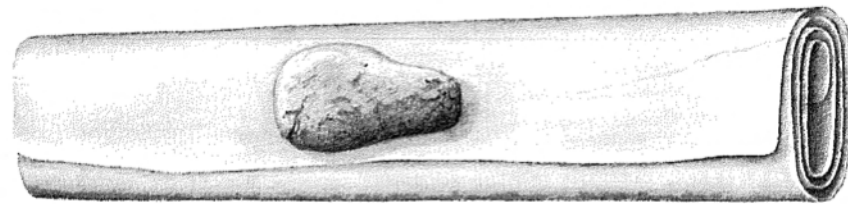


Sealing of a document with a bulla.

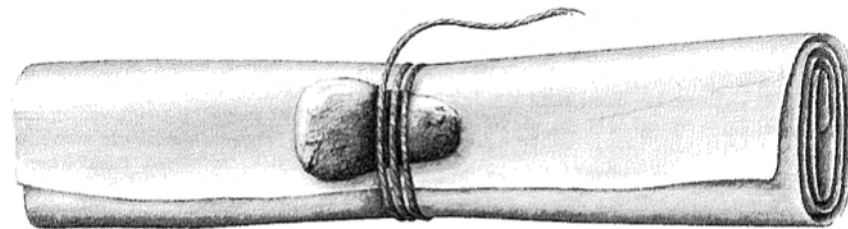
PLATE 73



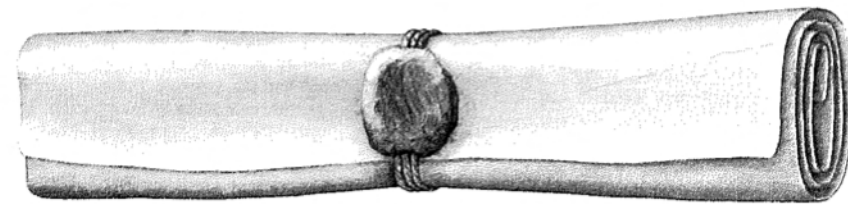
a



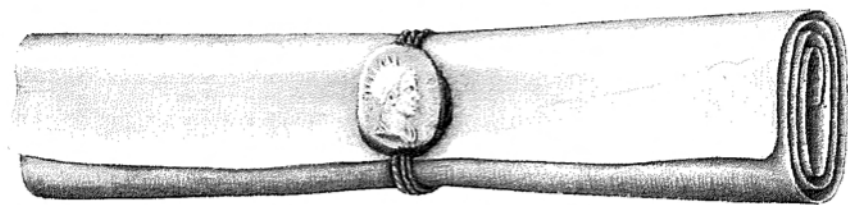
b



c



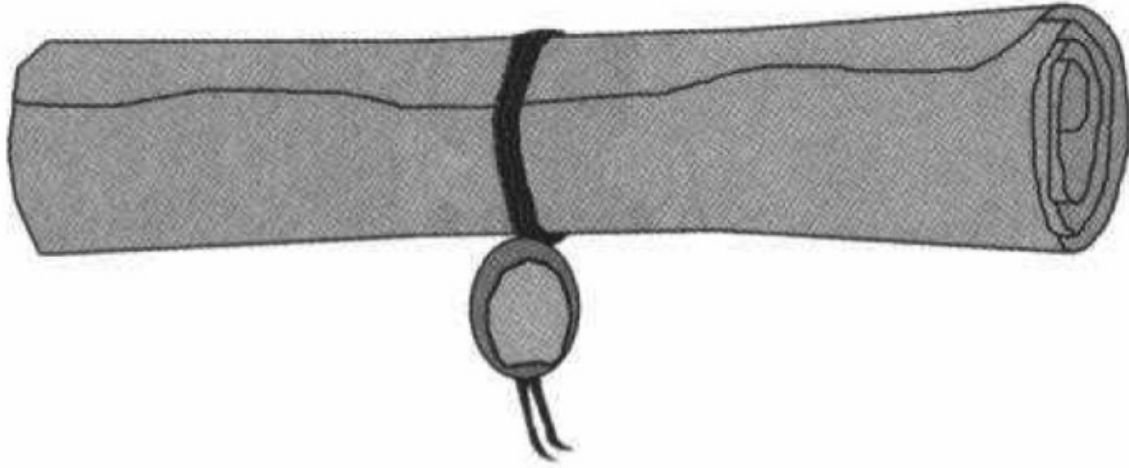
d



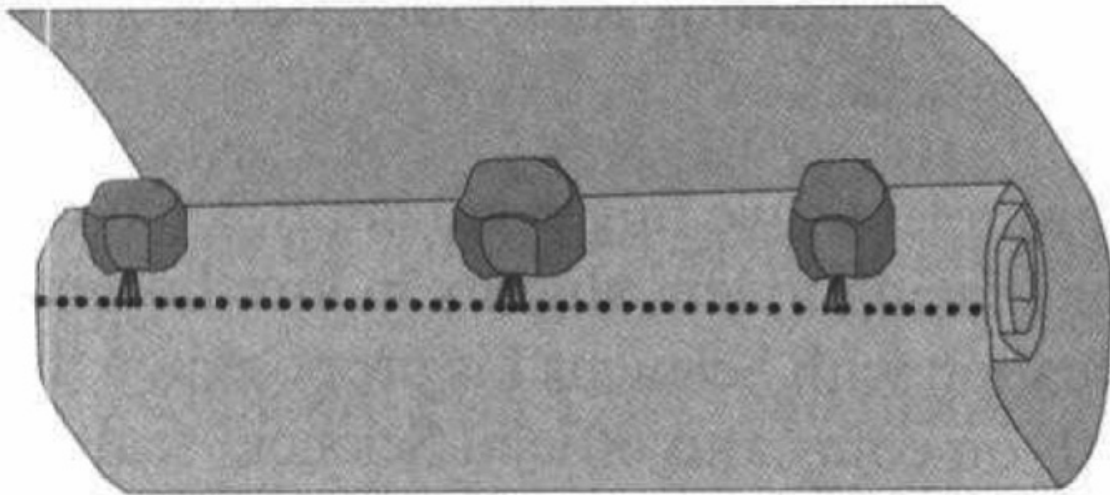
e

Sealing of a document with a medallion sealing.

PLATE 74



1



2

1. Sealing of a document with an appended sealing.
2. Sealing of a document with saddle sealings.

PLATE 75



1



2



3



4

1, 2. Rings with the bust of a Ptolemaic king, possibly Ptolemaios VI. Gold, 3.4 x 2.5 cm (right). Louvre, Paris, inv. BJ 1093,1092.

3. Cameo with the bust of a Ptolemaic king. Sardonyx, 3.7 x 2.5 cm. Cabinet des médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, inv. Camée 144.

4. Cameo with the bust of a Ptolemaic king. Glass, 1.9 x 2.5 cm. British Museum, London, inv. 1923,0401.1074.

PLATE 76

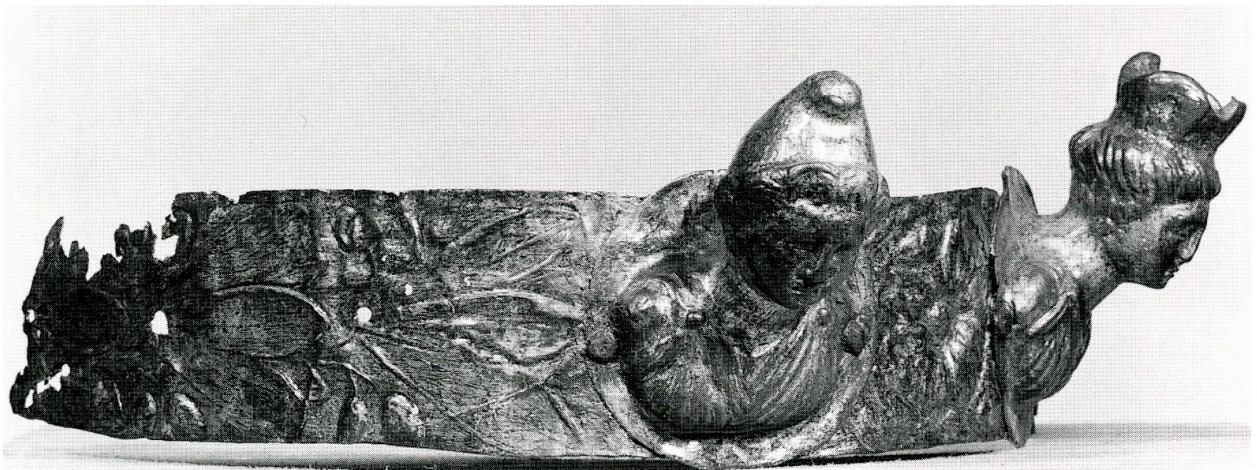


Kantharos with Dionysiac scenes, known as Cup of the Ptolemies, 1st century B.C. (?). Sardonyx, 12.5 cm (diam.).  
Cabinet des médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, inv. Camée 368.

PLATE 77



1



2

1. Bust of a priest. Marble, 61 cm (height). Musei Vaticani, Museo Pio Clementino, Rome, inv. 716.  
2. Crown with busts of Attis and Kybele, possibly from Rome, 3rd century A.D. (?). Gilt bronze, 18 cm (diam.). Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. M.I. 8169.

PLATE 78



1



3

1. Bust of Isis, found in Pompeii. Plasma, 1.9 x 1 cm. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, inv. 25926/93.  
3. Cast with jugate portraits of a Ptolemaic couple, probably Ptolemaios I and Berenike I. Plaster, 15 cm (diam.). Greco-Roman Museum, Alexandria, inv. 24245.

PLATE 79



1



2



3

1. Cameo with jugate portraits. Sardonyx, 4.1 x 6 x 1.5 cm. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. FG 11057.

2. Cameo with jugate portraits. Sardonyx, 11.5 x 10.2 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, inv. IXa 81.

3. Cameo with jugate portraits, known as Gonzaga Cameo. Sardonyx, 16.7 x 11.8 cm. State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, inv. H 291.



PLATE 80



1



2

1. Cast with a male head, found at Begram. Plaster, 19.1 cm (diam.). French excavations of 1939, cat. no. 132.
2. Sealing impressed with a device carved in relief, found in Delos. Excavations of the French School at Athens.